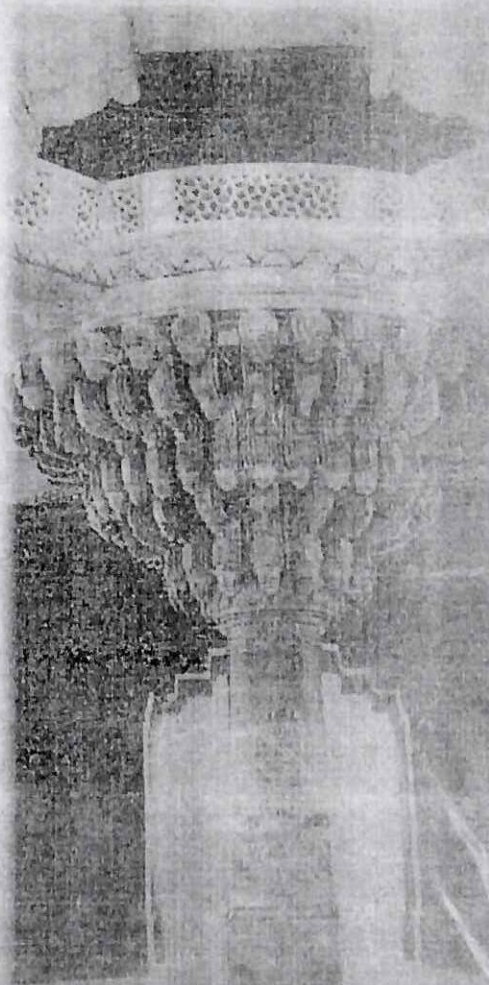
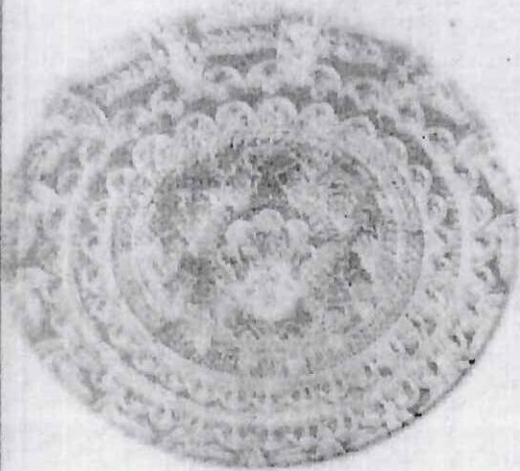


# MEDIEVAL INDIA

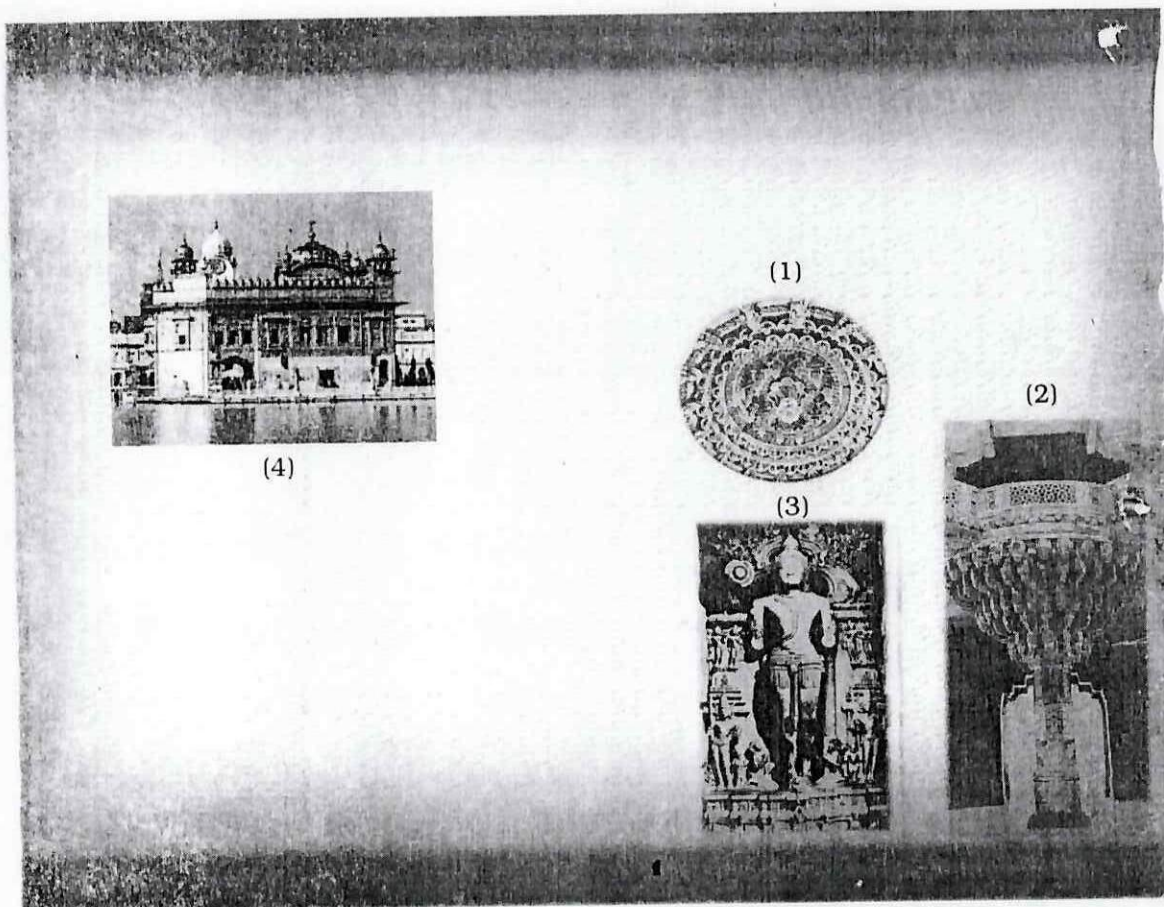
A Textbook  
for Class XI



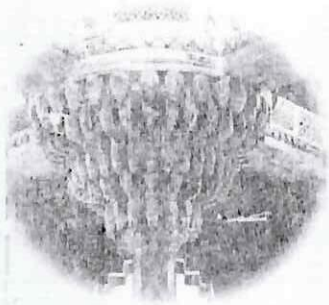
# Medieval India



*about the cover*



1. Mount Abu, Vimala Vasahi, Sabha Mandap ceiling,  
A.D. 1031, Solanki period
2. Fatehpur Sikri, Diwan-i-Khas
3. Surya, Sun Temple, Konarak, Orissa
4. The Golden Temple



# Medieval India

A Textbook for Class XI

**MEENAKSHI JAIN**



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्  
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## FOREWORD

The Higher Secondary stage in education is crucial in many ways. At this stage, children are better placed to exercise a choice of courses keeping in view their interests, attitude, aptitude and capabilities. They may choose either a specialised academic course or job oriented vocational courses. This is the stage of maximum challenge. Students themselves are passing through an age-specific critical phase of their lives — transition from adolescence to youth, from general inquisitiveness to scientific enquiry.

The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* – 2000 (NCFSE – 2000) developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training takes all these factors into account. After nation wide consultations, the NCERT decided to prepare new textbooks in each area. It became essential in view of the pace of change particularly in the last decade of the twentieth century. These changes have created visible impacts in every field of human endeavour and activity. The NCERT continuously attempts to perceive the learning needs of the future citizens who would be contributing professionally in their careers.

The preparation, and teaching and learning of the new textbooks in history are an essential part of it. The new techniques and technologies, new excavations and explorations have resulted in fresh interpretations of several situations in history which is one of the major electives of study at the Higher Secondary stage. As per the recommendations of the 1988 curriculum framework of NCERT, history as a separate subject is to be introduced only at the Higher Secondary stage. Before this stage it is studied as an integral part of social sciences. This fact initiated the development of a fresh set of history textbooks for Higher Secondary classes. Globally, writing of history textbooks invariably attracts considerable attention for various reasons. The new NCERT textbooks in

history have been prepared adhering strictly to the principle of giving an objective account of historical events. The latest researches and interpretations in the field have been incorporated.

The NCERT is grateful to Dr. Meenakshi Jain of Delhi University and Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, for preparing the present volume. We are also grateful to all those who have helped her in the preparation, finalisation and production of the book.

The NCERT welcomes suggestions from professional educationists as well as from parents and students which would help to improve the book.

New Delhi  
October 2002

J.S. RAJPUT  
*Director*  
National Council of Educational  
Research and Training



## PREFACE

The modern era has often been described as the age of information. Indeed, it is the steady and continuous expansion of knowledge that imparts this epoch its extraordinary dynamism and vitality. The realm of history has not remained isolated from these general currents. It, too, has witnessed an amazing extension of frontiers, as new methods and techniques of analysis have enriched and deepened our comprehension of the past.

Academics of varying specialisations and orientations have contributed to the ever-growing corpus of historical writing. However, unlike developments in the field of science and technology, with which the students are generally abreast, research in the discipline of history remains largely beyond their gaze. Students need to be familiarised with the complex task of reconstructing the past that historians are engaged in, as knowledge of the past is necessary to build a better future. Care, however, has to be taken to ensure that while the story is presented in its complexity, it is sufficiently concise so as not to place too great a burden on students who have to study several other subjects at the same time. It is hoped that this work goes some way in meeting these requirements.

The medieval period of Indian history covered in this book was a time of extraordinary developments. It opens with the rise of numerous state formations in the old and newly populated areas of the sub-continent, and witnesses an efflorescence in the literary, spiritual, and artistic realms. The momentous political advent of Islam in the sub-continent also occurs in this era, culminating in the establishment of the first Islamic state in India, namely, the Delhi Sultanate. The ensuing Mughal Empire dominates the historical discourse on this age. The present work examines the political, economic, social and cultural trends of this epoch, and attempts to familiarise students with its main currents.

This book is based entirely on the research of historians in India and abroad, as also contemporary chronicles of the period. A list of the principal works on which it has depended heavily is appended at the end of the text.

— Meenakshi Jain

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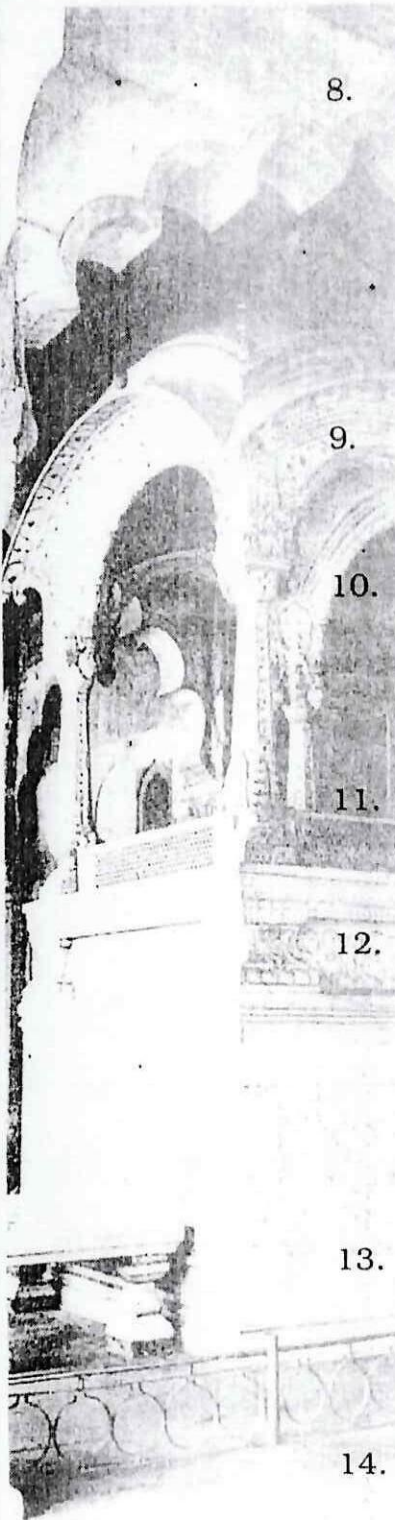
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# **CONSTITUTION OF INDIA**

## **Part IV A**

### **Fundamental Duties of Citizens**

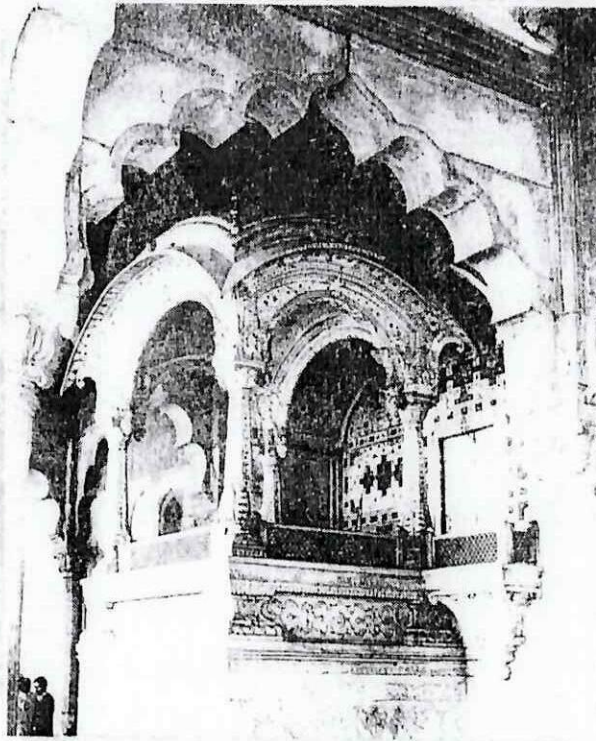
#### **ARTICLE 51A**

**Fundamental Duties – It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —**

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wild life and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.



## INTRODUCTION



### **India after Harsha : An Overview**

**THE** interregnum between the death of Harsha in the mid-seventh century A.D. and the rise of the Delhi Sultanate nearly six hundred years later is often viewed as a tedious epoch in Indian history, with few redeeming features. Certainly, the proliferation of dynasties gives the era a chaotic appearance. Yet, the polity remains dynamic and is notable for the assimilation of new groups into the system. The realms of culture and religion are enriched by

intense creativity, and overall, this is a time of considerable accomplishments in the fields of language, aesthetics, and spirituality.

### **Rise of New Kingdoms**

Though not an age of great empires, the hallmark of this period is the ceaseless striving of regional and local rulers for imperial status. At the turn of the sixth-seventh century, in distant Kamarupa, Bhaskaravarman briefly made himself master of the eastern quarters. The



opening of the eighth century witnessed the ascendancy of Yashovarman in Kanauj. A reputed warrior, he is even said to have allied with China against the growing power of the Arabs. He is also remembered as the patron of the great Sanskrit litterateur, Bhababhuti, as well as Vakpati, composer of the Prakrit poem, *Gaudavaho* ("Slaying of the king of Gauda"). Also in the eighth century, Lalitaditya of Kashmir made the Karkota dynasty the most powerful in India since that of the Guptas. He routed the Arabs of Sind and established his mastery over Kanauj, and was also the builder of the magnificent Martand temple.

Thereafter, as Kashmir receded from political prominence, two new powers, the Gurjara Pratiharas and the Palas of Bengal strode the north Indian stage. The former, settled for over a hundred and fifty years in Rajputana, stood as bulwarks against the marching Arabs. A particularly ferocious encounter took place towards the second quarter of the eighth century, when Arab forces overran Kutch, the Kathiawar peninsula, northern Gujarat, southern Rajputana, probably reaching as far as Malwa. While north India was saved by Nagabhatta, a chief of the Gurjara Pratihara clan and ruler of Avanti, the Arabs were halted in the Deccan by the viceroy of the Chalukyan king of Badami. The grateful sovereign lavished upon him the titles "solid pillar of Dakshinapatha," and "repeller of the unrepellable."

Meanwhile, in Bengal after long years of anarchy, the chiefs elected

Gopala king of the region in the last half of the eighth century. The new ruler swiftly ended the prevailing conditions of *matsyanyaya* (law of the fishes, strong devouring the weak) and launched Bengal on a course of imperial greatness. His son and successor, Dharmapala, who is ranked among the great sovereigns of Bengal, extended Pala rule over substantial parts of north India. An ardent Buddhist who commissioned the construction of several monasteries, he also founded the renowned university of Vikramsila.

A new dynasty came to power in the Deccan as well. In the mid-eighth century, the illustrious Rashtrakutas supplanted the declining Chalukyas of Badami. The word 'Rashtrakuta' in early Deccan records designated an official, possibly the head of a 'rashtra' or province. It is likely that the founder of the dynasty was one such official. The great monarchs of the line included Indra, Dantidurga, and Krishna who built the famous rock-cut Kailash temple at Ellora. The dynasty entered a new phase with the accession of Dhruv, who launched its northern expansionist drive.

Three great powers towered over the Indian landscape at the close of the eighth century. For the next hundred years, the Palas, the Gurjara Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas engaged in a tripartite struggle for empire centred around possession of the imperial city of Kanauj.

#### Other Developments

The conflict between rival kingdoms was not the only highlight of the era. It



was also marked by the incorporation of new communities into the system. Several tribal groups made the transition from pastoral economies to settled agriculture, as a consequence of which agrarian society was considerably expanded. Local and tribal forces also began to contribute to state formation. In Orissa, for instance, the Shailodbhavas, who came down from the Mahendragiri mountains and settled near the Rishikulya river, established a kingdom in the central regions. The cultural patterns of the older all India empires began to percolate deep into the hinterland as countless local and regional durbars emulated these forms.

#### **Cultural and Religious Trends**

The growing participation of local and tribal groups was accompanied by the elevation of their gods in the regional and all India pantheon. Deities hitherto worshipped by small communities emerged as symbols of larger identities. The Jagannath temple at Puri is perhaps the most well known example of this phenomenon. Originally a tribal god, Lord Jagannath now began to define the identity of the Oriya people and region.

Numerous such instances can be noted around this time in different parts of the country. The local cult at Chidambaram, for instance, was steadily upgraded from the sixth century onwards, till finally in the tenth, the Cholas embraced it as the royal family deity. The "fish-eyed" Minakshi in Madurai was similarly transformed into a leading goddess. There was thus

a rich exchange between the lowest and remotest strata of society and polity and those at its upper reaches.

This was also a time of active interaction between Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. Buddhism was for all practical purposes absorbed into Hinduism and virtually ceased to lead an independent existence in the country. The similarity of ideas between the *Upanishads* and Mahayana Buddhism undoubtedly facilitated this process, as Buddhism retained so much of Hinduism in the form of its legends, rites and deities.

The great Sankaracharya renewed Vedanta philosophy and incorporated several doctrinal and organisational features of Buddhism and Jainism into Hinduism. He organised the *sannyasis* into ten Orders and established four spiritual centres at Badrinath, Puri, Dwarka and Sringeri. Over a period of time, the Buddha himself was assimilated as an *avatar* of Vishnu, as was also the Jain Tirthankara, Rishabh. Several basic tenets of Buddhism and Jainism, especially *ahimsa* and vegetarianism, became integral to Hindu doctrine. The Buddhist Siddha tradition also deeply influenced the new Saivite sect of Nathpanthis initiated by Gorakhnath.

Theistic Hinduism, as exemplified in Vaishnavism, Saivism and the worship of the Mother Goddess, came into its own in this period. The theory of *avatar*, divine incarnation, though originating in earlier times, now assumed special prominence. Vishnu,



Siva, Sakti, the Jinaś and the Buddhas began to be worshipped in their personal manifestations. This stimulated the growth of temple cults and the development of the Puranas, the Vaishnava Samhitas, Saiva Agamas, Shakta Tantras and Mahatmya texts. The growing network of pilgrimage routes reinforced cultural unity amidst the proliferating states and kingdoms.

A powerful bhakti movement, developed by the Alvar and Nayanar saints, began in the Tamil region around the sixth century, and subsequently spread through Karnataka and Maharashtra to north India and Bengal. Its great saints included Appar, Sambandar and Manikkavasagar, whose writings were collected in the *Tirumurai*, known as the Tamil Veda. The twelfth book, *Periya Puranam*, was composed by the poet Shekkilar at the behest of the Chola king, Kulottunga I.

Ramanuja, head priest of the famous Vishnu temple at Srirangam around A.D. 1100, gave a new impetus to the movement by reconciling metaphysical speculation with popular bhakti. He is popularly regarded as the founder of Sri Vaishnavism. Madhav (1199-1278) was another great exponent of bhakti in the south.

Speculative philosophy did not lag behind. In addition to Sankara's exposition of Vedanta, treatises on *dharma* by Nathamuni, Yamunacharya, Ramanuja and Madhav were composed in these times.

#### Art and Literature

The arts, language and literature pulsated with similar dynamism. Indian

artistic sensibilities reached their zenith with the rock-cut temple at Ellora, the monumental Chola structures, the gigantic Jain statue at Sravana Belgola, and the remarkable temples of Khajuraho, Orissa, Mathura, and Banaras.

Sanskrit and Prakrit literature flourished, as did the *apabhramsas*, forerunners of the modern regional languages. Among the creative geniuses of the time was the poet Kampan, composer of the Tamil *Ramayana*. Kannada received a boost from the compositions of Pampa, Ponna and Ranna on the lives of the Jain Tirthankaras, as well as the *Mahabharata*. A new era in Telugu literature was inaugurated with Nanniah's translation of the *Adi* and *Sabha Parvas* of the *Mahabharata*. This was continued by Tikkana, from the *Virata Parva* to the end. The Alvar and Nayanar composers (Tamil and other languages) and the Jain, Hemachandra (Sanskrit and *apabhramsa*), added to the glory to the epoch.

#### Material Prosperity

India presented a picture of abundance on the material plane as well. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang, who arrived in the seventh century, observed the flourishing state of inland and foreign trade. He wrote of Saurashtra, "the men all derive their livelihood from the sea and engage in commerce and exchange of commodities." Arab authors of the ninth and tenth centuries also portrayed



India as a land of great wealth. They described the Rashtrakuta ruler of the western Deccan as the third or fourth greatest sovereign of the world. The Gurjara Pratihara were also depicted as mighty monarchs possessing vast treasures of gold and silver.

Numerous inscriptions attest to the activities of merchants, traders and bankers, and their corporate organisations. There are descriptions of the "organisation of 505 merchants" and the "assembly of merchants from 18 sub-divisions of 79 districts meeting together in a conference" from south India.

There are also accounts of urban centres that catered to the requirements of localised exchange networks, in addition to long distance trade. While a systematic delineation has yet to be undertaken, twenty towns have been mapped in the Malwa plateau in Paramara times, over seventy in Andhra from the eleventh and later centuries, and as many as a hundred and thirty one in the Chahamana kingdom. The

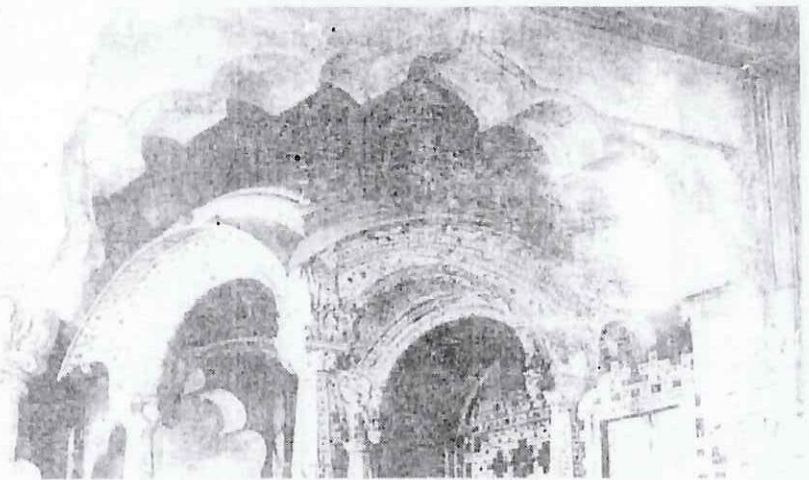
countless new towns in the Gurjara Pratihara domains have been linked to a realignment of trade routes in consonance with agrarian and mercantile expansion.

The inscriptions of the period refer to towns and markets (*hatts*) founded by kings and their officials, which often also served as religious centres. Items of trade included a vast array of agricultural and non-agricultural produce and horses. There are references to bronze and cloth dealers, weavers, distillers, merchant guilds, and customs houses. I-tsing, in the second half of the seventh century, mentions hundreds of traders from Tamralipti (Bengal) proceeding to central India. The records list various types of coins – the copper *pana*, the silver *dramma*, the gold *suvarna*, *dinara* and *nisaka*, besides the *rupaka*.

All in all, these were centuries of vibrancy, even if they are difficult to fit into conventional historical categories.

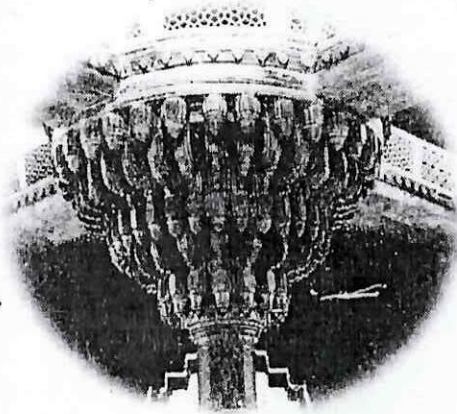
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## RECONSTRUCTING MEDIEVAL INDIA



RECONSTRUCTING  
MEDIEVAL INDIA  
TRANSITION FROM  
THE ANCIENT TO  
MEDIEVAL PERIOD





### Transition from the Ancient to the Medieval Period

**FOR** reasons that remain debatable, there is general agreement that the death of Harsha in A.D. 647 represents a 'milestone in Indian history. A long and eventful epoch draws to a close and a new one dawns. While there is dispute on the date of its actual commencement, it is accepted that there is a period of overlap during which one phase blends into the other. This interim period is now called "early medieval India," with the medieval period, properly speaking, regarded as beginning with the establishment of Turkish rule in Delhi in A.D. 1206.

The choice of the word 'medieval' has raised several questions in academic circles. Was it chosen because the era it denoted fell between the ancient and modern periods? Or was it considered synonymous with Muslim rule that ran somewhat parallel to it? Or again, did its usage contain a value judgement, with 'medieval' perhaps hinting at a not

so bright phase in the country's history? While scholars debate the ramifications of the term, it remains the most widely used for the period of this study.

### Sources of Study

Unlike the earlier age, which was largely construed from archaeological findings, the reconstruction of the history of medieval India is a particularly rewarding exercise given the rich documentation available. Literary works like the *Prithviraja-Vijaya-Kavya* and the *Hammira-Mahakavya* provide stirring narratives of important events of the early medieval period, though given their genre, they have to be used with caution. There are also historical accounts like the *Rajmala*, the official chronicle of the ruling family of Tipperah, and the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. Jain writings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provide glimpses of political and cultural events, while the Tibetan monk, Dharmasvamin, has left a poignant testimony of the condition of Buddhist shrines after the Turkish invasion of Bihar.

For the Sultanate and Mughal periods, there is an abundance of official records, administrative manuals, gazetteers, accounts of foreign travellers, court histories, royal autobiographies, biographies, and even private correspondence. These are augmented by the proliferation of archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence and later also the growing volume of European factory



records. Besides, a plethora of accounts from the different regions has further contributed to knowledge of this period. The Maratha administrative records, in particular those of the Peshwa Daftar, are a mine of information on the era. The *Taksim* and *Arhsattha* documents in Rajasthani have also been used by historians to reconstruct the landscape of the past.

Contemporary historical accounts comprise a primary source of information on the Delhi Sultanate. Among them may be mentioned Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir*, Minhaj Siraj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* and the *Fatwah-i-Jahandari*, Alif's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* and Isami's *Futuh-us-Salatin*.

The documentation of history continued under the Mughals, with the chroniclers providing meticulous details about various facets of the empire. The leading historians of the age include Abul Fazl (*Akbar Nama*), Nizamuddin Ahmad (*Tabaqat-i-Akbari*), Badauni (*Muntakhab al-tawarikh*), Abdul Hamid Lahori (*Badshahnama*) and Khafi Khan (*Muntakhab-ul Lubab*). Rulers like Babur and Jahangir, and ladies of the royal family like Gulbadan Begum, penned interesting accounts of their times.

Sufi literature constitutes another valuable source of information. Several biographies (*tazkirahs*) of Sufi saints and compilations of their sayings (*malfuzat*) are available, among the most important in the latter category being the *Fawadul Fawaid*.

### Growth of Historiography

The method by which the history of a particular era is recorded by contemporary and later historians is known as historiography. Medieval Indian historiography falls into three neat phases with the first covering the works of medieval chroniclers who were usually court historians.

Medieval history again became the subject of study in colonial times when British administrators, grappling with the complexities of governing the country, began to search for information about past customs and practices. Finally, come the works of modern historians, which continue to contribute to our understanding of the period.

The records of the early medieval historians have often been described as essentially scribal in nature, since they examined no source material and only recorded (though they sometimes critiqued) the actions of the rulers. Their histories were court-centric, and generally took no note of the world beyond the royal durbār.

Enunciating the methodology of medieval chroniclers, Barani advised readers to place complete trust in the historians. He did, however, add that historians were duty bound to be truthful in their narratives. By and large, this approach was adhered to by medieval writers, who regarded history as that which had been recorded by reliable raconteurs.

The raconteur approach broadly continued in the Mughal era, which



witnessed a proliferation of historical writings, though perhaps not the articulation of superior methods of historiography. The notable exceptions included Abul Fazl (court chronicler of Emperor Akbar) and Ali Muhammad Khan, diwan of Gujarat and author of the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* (1748). Both writers enjoyed unprecedented access to state papers, on which they based their works, and did not depend solely on past accounts.

#### Colonial Trends

A new phase in the historiography of medieval India began with the colonial advent. British historical writing on the period was intimately linked with the expansion of their rule in India, as also the major intellectual schools current in England, principally those of the Enlightenment, the Utilitarians and the Romantics.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Asiatic Society of Bengal sponsored the publication of medieval chronicles under the *Bibliotheca Indica* series. Elliot and Dowson's famous eight-volume *History of India as told by its own Historians*, published between 1867-1877, was a compilation of extracts of over one hundred and sixty medieval accounts. This genre of writing came to be known as the 'history of the historians,' and formed the basis of early British reconstruction of the medieval era.

British historians of the early twentieth century continued to adhere to this methodology. Lane-Poole (*Medieval India under Muhammadan*

*Rule*, 1903), Vincent Smith (*Oxford History of India*, 1919), and the *Cambridge History of India* writers, relying on almost the same source-materials, produced virtually similar political dissertations. Their perspectives did not encompass developments in the social and economic realms.

W.H. Moreland broke new ground by examining political history against the backdrop of economic developments. Despite the authoritative nature of his monographs, which included *The Agriculture of the United Provinces* (1904), *The Revenue Administration of the United Provinces* (1911), *India at the death of Akbar* and *India from Akbar to Aurangzeb*, his works betray a distinct attempt to exalt British economic policies and administration to the detriment of the previous rulers. The economic conditions of India at the end of the sixteenth century, he concluded, were characterised by "inadequate production and faulty distribution."

Other English historians such as Lane-Poole, Sir Wolseley Haig and William Irvine also utilised the source-materials of Elliot and Dowson to write political histories that propagated the superiority of British rule as compared to that of the Mughals. Nonetheless, the contribution of early English historians in their study of Persian sources remains valuable.

#### Modern Developments

Modern Indian historiography on the medieval period began with



Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan and the Aligarh School in the second half of the nineteenth century. The political conditions of the age undoubtedly had a bearing on their approach. Sayyid Ahmed Khan sought to interpret Islam in terms of idioms and values of the nineteenth century. Sayyid Ahmed and Khuda Bakhsh extended their canvas beyond political matters and emphasised Islamic achievements in the fields of art, literature, science and religion.

After 1920, there was a major spurt in writings on medieval India. Mohammad Habib published a small but influential book, *Mahmud of Ghaznin* (1927), which stressed the economic motives underlying the Sultan's invasions of India. K.M. Ashraf in *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan* averred that there had been no cultural strife in India in the medieval period, while I.H. Qureshi in *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (1942), claimed that the Sultanate administration had been more efficient than that of contemporary native states. Faruki, in *Aurangzeb and his Times* (1935), described the monarch as a perfect ruler. A.B.M. Habibullah in *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* (1945) focused on the religious and cultural developments in the period.

Another important group of modern historians on medieval India was represented by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, G.S. Sardesai, Ishwari Prasad, A. L. Srivastava, P. Saran, R.P. Tripathi and K.S. Lal, among others. Sir Jadunath Sarkar has been described as the father

of modern historical research on account of his fidelity to original documents, study of the language of the sources, meticulous checking of details and testing of evidence. He declared it the duty of the historian to ensure that the past was not forgotten, and to trace the various influences "back to their sources, give them their due places in the time-scheme and show how they influenced or prepared the succeeding ages and what portion of present day Indian life and thought is the distinctive contribution of each race or creed that has lived in this land." His contributions include the five-volume *History of Aurangzeb* and the four volume *The Fall of the Mughal Empire*.

While Ishwari Prasad made conscious attempts to broaden the scope of history to encompass administrative developments and social and religious movements, K.S. Lal provided a painstakingly researched account of the Khalji period, which remains a standard reference work.

In 1952 Mohammad Habib wrote a long introduction to the revised edition of Elliot and Dowson's *History of India Vol II*, wherein he applied Marxist methodology to the study of medieval Indian history. This approach was continued by his son, Irfan Habib, whose *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, first published in 1963, opened new vistas in the study of medieval Indian history. In its extensive use of sources, careful attention to detail and sheer range, it remains the most authoritative study of agrarian relations in Mughal India.



The work spans the entire agrarian horizon from agricultural production, land rights, land revenue administration, taxation, peasant revolts, village communities, and much else.

Athar Ali's research on the racial and religious composition of the Mughal ruling elite (1970) is indispensable in any analysis of the power dynamics of

the period. S.A.A. Rizvi's works on Islamic revivalist movements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, his comprehensive survey of Sufism, as well as his religious and intellectual history of Akbar's reign, considerably extended the realm of the discipline beyond the economic and political. And the historians' tryst with the past continues.

### Exercises

1. Briefly describe the main sources of study for medieval India.
2. What were the main areas of research of modern Indian writers on medieval history?
3. Match the following:
 

|                    |                                        |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| a) Hasan Nizami    | <i>Fatwah-i-Jahandari</i>              |
| b) Minhaj Siraj    | <i>Futuh-us-Salatin</i>                |
| c) Ziauddin Barani | <i>Taj-ul-Maasir</i>                   |
| d) Afif            | <i>Tabaqat-i-Nasiri</i>                |
| e) Isami           | <i>Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi</i>             |
| f) W.H. Moreland   | <i>Agrarian System of Mughal India</i> |
| g) Irfan Habib     | <i>India at the death of Akbar</i>     |

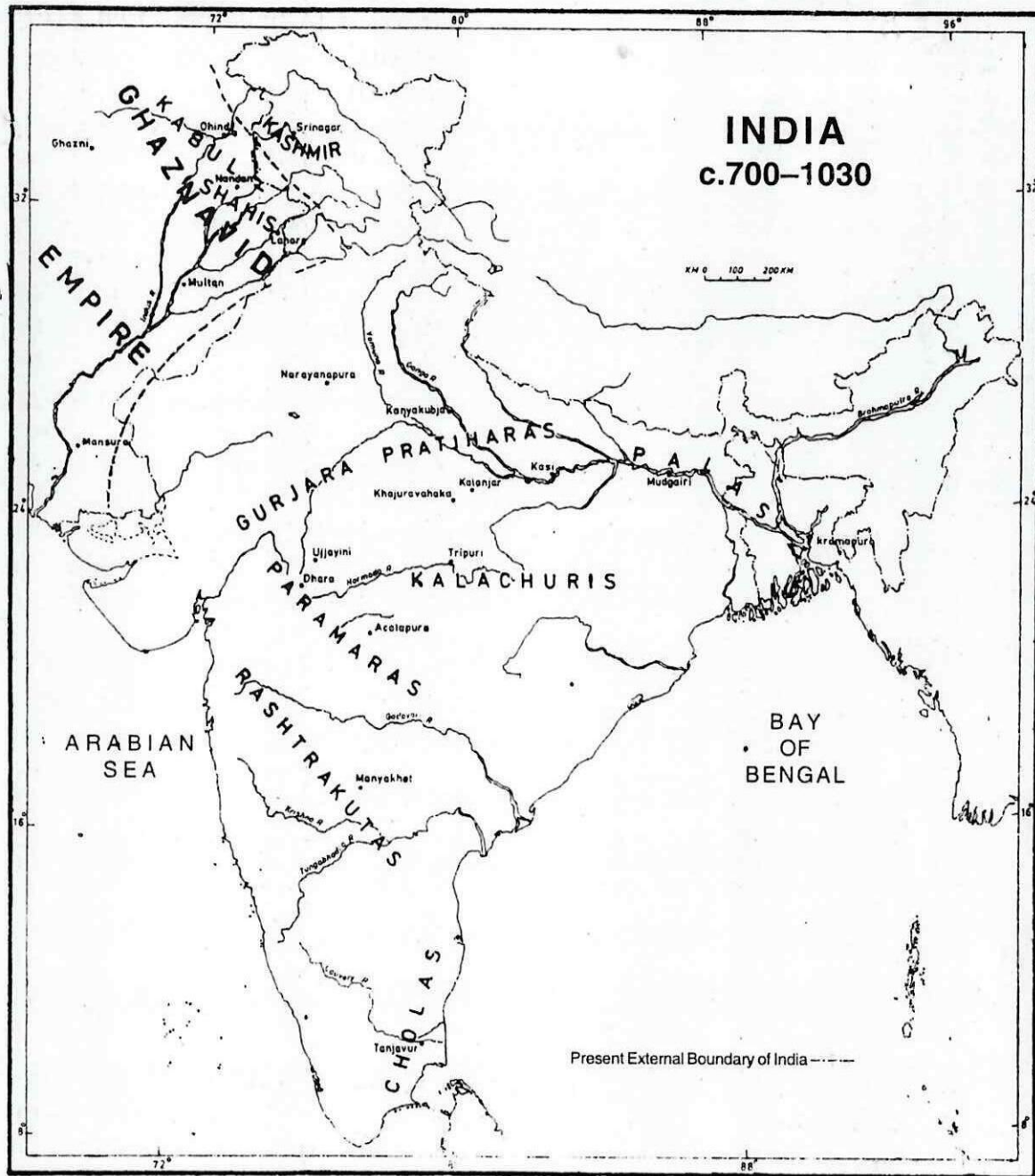
# 2 CHAPTER

## STRUGGLE FOR CHAKRAVARTITVA



STRUGGLE FOR  
CHAKRAVARTITVA  
STRUGGLE FOR  
CHAKRAVARTITVA





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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.



**NORTH INDIA** after the death of Harsha was the setting for a protracted contest for chakravartin status between three rising powers. Evenly matched in military strength and economic might, the Gurjara Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas steadfastly combated each other for mastery over the imperial city of Kanauj, even as they promoted cultural efflorescence within their realms.

#### Gurjara Pratiharas

The Gurjara Pratiharas, called Al-Jurz by the Arabs, first came into prominence in the seventh century A.D. According to tradition, a great ritual fire ceremony was performed at Mount Abu where some clans and groups were entrusted the task of fighting the invaders. Among them were the Gurjara Pratiharas, who also came to be known as the Agnikula Rajputs.

By the early ninth century they had brought large parts of Madhyadesh and the imperial city of Kanauj under their sway. Ruling first from Bhilmal, a town

near Mount Abu, they subsequently shifted their capital to Kanauj, where they are said to have presided over a significant cultural and religious transformation of north Indian society. They are also renowned for their sustained opposition to the Arabs and their long-drawn out contest with the Palas and the Rashtrakutas.

Numerous Arab travellers testified to the might of the Pratihara empire. Masudi provided a particularly graphic account in the second decade of the tenth century. "The king of Kanauj," he wrote, "has four armies in the four directions of the wind... the army of the North is assigned to make war against the prince of Multan and the Muslims, and the latter's subjects who are established on this frontier; the army of the South operates against the Ballahara, king of Mankir; the others against other enemies. His kingdom comprises 1,800,000 cities, villages or forts, situated in forests, and in well-watered and mountainous and rich territory... The king of al-Jurz is rich in camels and horses and has a numerous army..."

The Gurjara Pratihara ruler, Nagabhatta I, who appears to have ruled till A.D. 756, left a sizeable kingdom, which included parts of Rajasthan, Malwa and Gujarat. His successor, Vatsaraja, too, made extensive conquests and came into conflict with the ascendant Palas. He defeated a king of Bengal, who could be either Gopala or his son, Dharmapala. At this moment of triumph, however, the Rashtrakuta Dhruv appeared on the scene, vanquished both



the Pratihara and Pala rulers and commenced the three-way tussle.

Dhruv's death provided a much needed reprieve to the northern powers. The Pratiharas revived under Vatsaraja's son and successor, Nagabhatta II, whose suzerainty was recognised by the rulers of western Kathiawar, Andhra, Kalinga and Vidarbha. Nagabhatta II also attacked Kanauj, precipitating a conflict with Dharmapala, whom he worsted. As his encroachments on Pala territory increased, Dharmapala felt compelled to seek assistance from the Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III (A.D. 794-813). On the approach of the Rashtrakuta army, Nagabhatta fled the scene. But the subsequent return of the Rashtrakuta forces to the Deccan left the Pratiharas free to resume their expansionist course.

Around A.D. 836, there was a marked change in their fortunes with the ascendancy of the famous Bhoja on the Pratihara throne. Despite early setbacks against the Rashtrakutas and Palas, Bhoja eventually got the better of both and extended his domain from Punjab and Kathiawar to Koshal and Kanauj. The Kalachuris of Gorakhpur and the Chandellas of Bundelkhand also acknowledged his suzerainty. Leaving aside Kashmir, Sind, Pala territories in Bengal and Bihar, and the Kalachuri kingdom of Jabalpur, Bhoja was successful in conquering the rest of north India.

He ruled from the sacred city of Kanauj, was a devotee of Vishnu, and took the title of *Adi Varaha* as a mark

of his veneration of the God. His son Mahendrapal (A.D. 885-910) added Magadh and parts of north Bengal to the Pratihara empire, which was now described as extending from the source of the Ganga to that of the Reva (from the Himalayas to the Vindhya) and broadly embracing the region between the eastern and western oceans.

At the time of Mahendrapal's weak successors, the Rashtrakutas again struck Kanauj, but retreated without consolidating their gains. Despite attempts, the Pratiharas failed to regain their former glory, and several new kingdoms rose on the ruins of their empire.

#### The Palas

The Pala domain was called the "kingdom of Dharma" by the Arabs after the great king, Dharmapala (A.D. 780-815). Though defeated by the Gurjara Pratihara and Rashtrakuta kings, Dharmapala eventually carved out a kingdom embracing Bengal, Bihar, large parts of Orissa, Nepal, Assam and briefly, Kanauj. A copper plate inscription discovered at Khalimpur provides valuable information on his reign.

Dharmapala became so formidable as to place a nominee on the throne of Kanauj. He even held a grand assembly in that premier city, which was attended by an impressive string of vassals, where he consecrated himself master of northern India. He was among the great patrons of Buddhism and the university he founded soon rivalled Nalanda.



The Palas retained their hegemony over north India under his son, Devapala (A.D. 815-855). The Pala empire was now described as extending from the Himalayas to the Vindhya, and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. The dynasty went into decline under Devapala's successors. The Gurjara Pratiharas occupied parts of Bihar and towards the end of the ninth century northern Bengal as well, even as the Rashtrakutas advanced from the south.

The Palas presided over a flourishing empire, which maintained active trade links with South East Asia, where there was a strong demand for textiles and pottery, in addition to which rice may have also been exported. From the seventh to the eleventh centuries, south-east Bengal was linked with Arab trading settlements in the Malaya peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago.

The Palas were great promoters of art and literature. Though no buildings of their age have survived, a distinctive school of sculpture developed during their reign. A literary style known as *gaudiriti* also flourished around this time. A number of tanks and channels dug during Pala rule are testimony to the public works undertaken by them.

The Palas were devout followers of Buddhism and made generous endowments to Buddhist monasteries, though they also gave gifts to Brahmins and constructed temples. During their rule, a king of Java and Sumatra made a bequest for a college at Nalanda for the benefit of foreign students. Among

the celebrated Buddhist monks who lived in Pala domains may be mentioned Dipankar Srijnana. The university of Vikramsila attracted several Tibetan monks. Mahayana Buddhism travelled to Tibet and South East Asia from Bengal, and along with it went the Pala style of art which influenced cultural forms in those countries.

#### The Rashtrakutas

The Rashtrakutas, called Ballahara by the Arabs, came to power around A.D. 743 in the Deccan, and ruled from their capital at Mankir or Manyakheta (present Malkhed, near Sholapur). They are described in Sanskrit and Arabic sources as the paramount power of India for nearly two centuries. Arab travellers refer to the Rashtrakuta ruler as "the king of kings (*malik al-muluk*) of al-Hind ..."

The Arabs have provided extravagant descriptions of the splendour of the Rashtrakuta kingdom. Masudi states, "The Ballahara lives in the city of Mankir. This city is forty *parasangs* in length, is made of teak, bamboo, and other sorts of wood. It is said that there are a million elephants there to transport the goods of the people. In the king's own stable there are sixty thousand elephants, and one hundred and twenty thousand elephants belong to the cloth-bleachers there. In the idolhouse, there are about twenty thousand idols made of a variety of materials, such as gold, silver, iron, copper, brass, and ivory, as also of crushed stones adorned with precious jewels. In it there is also an idol made



of gold, which is twelve cubits in height. It is on a throne of gold, under the centre of a golden dome, adorned with jewels, pearls and precious stones."

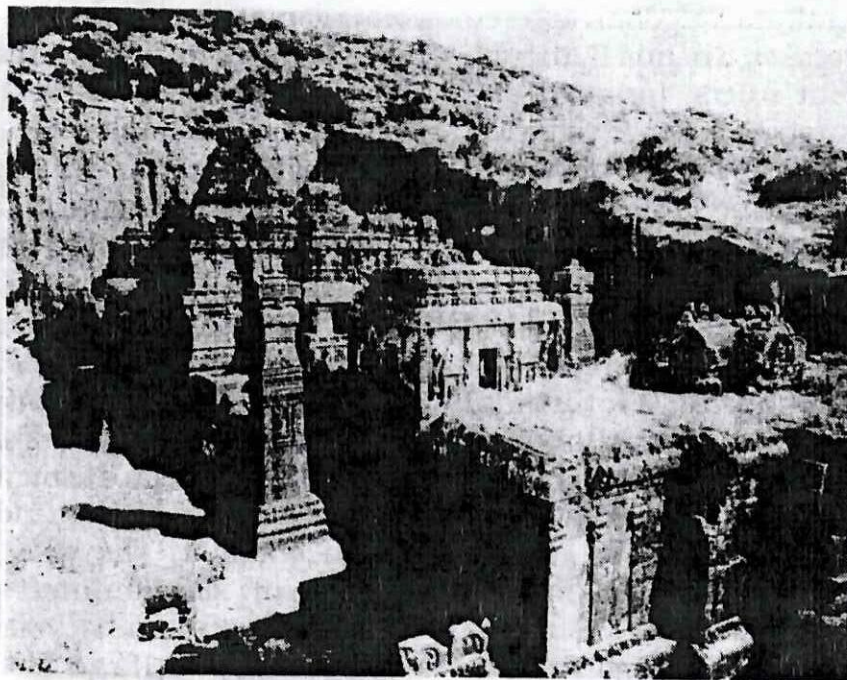
The tremendous wealth of the Rashtrakutas has been attributed to the geographical location of the kingdom, which enabled them to profit from the thriving maritime trade.

The first important king of the dynasty was Dantidurga. He conquered the Gurjara kingdom of Nandipuri (near Broach) and the realm of the Gurjara Pratiharas in Malwa, besides extending his authority over the eastern regions of Madhya Pradesh. He was succeeded by his uncle, Krishna I (758-773), who extended the Rashtrakuta domain beyond Maharashtra, to include present day Hyderabad and

Mysore, but is best associated with the Kailash temple.

The dynasty's northern drive commenced with Dhruv (A.D. 779-793), who crossed the Vindhyas and inflicted a crushing defeat on Vatsaraja, the Pratihara ruler, besides also defeating the Pala king, Dharmapala. To commemorate his victory over the two premier northern powers, Dhruv incorporated the symbols of the Ganga and Yamuna into the Rashtrakuta emblem.

Dhruv's death around A.D. 793 gave the northern powers time to recoup. The Rashtrakutas, however, returned under Govinda III (A.D. 793-814), who trounced the Pratihara ruler, Nagabhata II. Govinda III is said to have proceeded upto the Himalayas and



*Kailash Temple, Ellora*



visited Prayag, Banaras and Gaya. Events in the south, however, forced him to return, but he got the better of his adversaries in the region and for a while virtually the whole of India acknowledged Rashtrakuta supremacy.

The decline of the Rashtrakutas set in under his son and successor, Amoghavarsha, a young boy of thirteen when he ascended the throne in A.D. 814. Though he ruled for over half a century, he lacked the military skills of his father and grandfather. He was, however, a man of considerable talents. An author of repute, he composed one of the earliest texts in Kannada literature, the *Kavirajamarga*. Besides, he patronized several Jain and Hindu scholars. He ended his life by taking *jal-samadhi* in the Tungabhadra river.

The Rashtrakuta kingdom suffered under his successor, Krishna II, though two subsequent rulers, Indra III and Krishna III scored impressive victories. Indra III led a brilliant northern campaign against the Pratihara ruler, Mahipala, while Krishna III in alliance with his brother-in-law, captured Kanchi and Tanjore and even inflicted a defeat on the Cholas, whereafter he planted a pillar of victory at Rameshwaram. The Rashtrakutas were patrons of Saivism, Vaishnavism, the Sakta cults and also Jainism.

#### Nature of Polity

The kingdoms of the Gurjara Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas were not centralised monarchies but, following the ancient ideal of

chakravartin, loosely held territories in which numerous small kings were bound in tributary relationship to the monarch. The vassal chiefs enjoyed virtual independence in the internal affairs of their territories and when required, rendered military assistance to the monarch. A sharp increase in the number of small chieftains, called *samantas*, characterised this period.

The administrative apparatus of the centrally-held territories was a continuation of older forms, with the monarch assisted by a number of ministers in charge of various governmental departments. The army comprised a vital wing of the state and Arab accounts of the period are replete with references to the martial strength of the kings of al-Hind. In addition to maintaining huge contingents of infantry and cavalry, the rulers kept large numbers of elephants, besides importing horses from Arabia and West Asia. The Palas and Rashtrakutas also maintained a sizeable naval strength.

The directly administered areas were divided into *bhuktis* (provinces, called *rashtra* in Rashtrakuta territory), and *mandalas* or *visayas* (districts). The head of the province was the *uparika*, while the chief of the district was the *visayapati*. Below the *visaya* was the *pattala*, though not much is known about it. The village was the lowest unit of administration. The village headman and accountant were assisted by village elders and committees which oversaw local matters.



**Exercises**

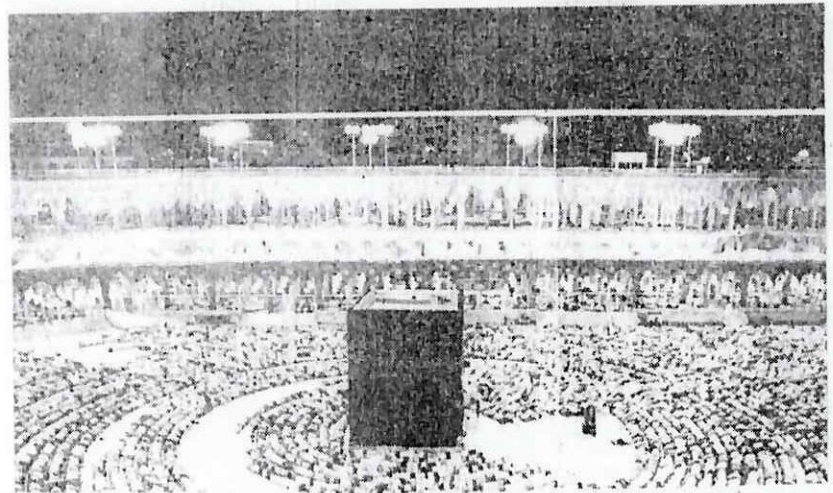
1. Briefly describe the rise of the Gurjara Pratiharas and the extant of their kingdom.
2. What were the achievements of the Palas in the realms of art and culture.
3. Briefly describe the nature of the polity under the Gurjara Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas.
4. Write short notes on:
  - a) Bhoja
  - b) Dharmapala
  - c) Amoghavarsha
5. Match the following:

|                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Nagabhatta II      | was a Buddhist monk                 |
| b) Dharmapala         | took the title of <i>Adi Varaha</i> |
| c) Bhoja              | were called Al-Jurz by the Arabs    |
| d) Gurjara Pratiharas | was the capital of the Rashtrakutas |
| e) Mankir             | was an author of repute             |
| f) Amoghavarsha       | revived Pratihara power             |
| g) Srignana           | held a grand assembly at Kanauj     |

# 3

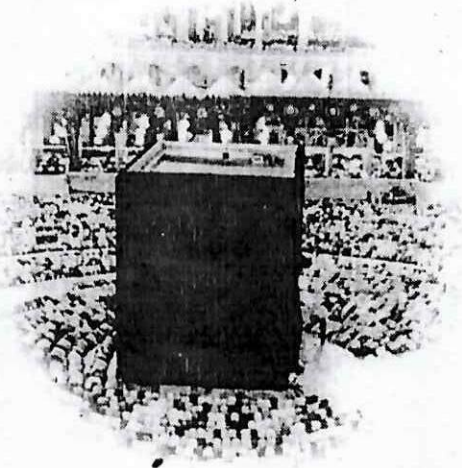
## CHAPTER

### THE WORLD OF ISLAM



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In the seventh century A.D., a new religion was born in Arabia, which dramatically altered existing equations in the lands to its east and west. In an amazingly short time, it carved out an empire extending from North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula to Iran and India. Though compelled to retreat in some places, notably Spain, central and south-eastern Europe, Islam has on the whole held to these territories over the centuries. Indeed, it has added to them, albeit not in the heady manner of its initial victories.

### **The Land and the People**

Much of the Arabian peninsula is arid, inhospitable, and largely inaccessible. There are hardly any good harbours except Aden, and barring Hajar, not a single internal river to facilitate transport and communication between its eastern and western regions. The regions' most striking features were the hardy bedouin pastoralists with their portable tents, and the sedentarised nomads of the oases. The bedouin were

constantly on the move in search of pasture, constantly struggling for survival, and therefore constantly at war.

The tiny tip on the south-west, however, was fertile. Famous for its frankincense and myrrh, it was thickly populated. In pre-Islamic times, the southern Arabians dominated the region through their naval skills, which linked both sides of the Indian Ocean with Arabia. They also opened up the northern overland trade routes to transport their wares to the Fertile Crescent and the Mediterranean region, and recruited the north Arabian bedouin to ensure the safety of the caravans. In course of time, caravan-cities arose on the western Arabian trade route. Mecca was a leading caravan-city, dominated by the tribe of Quraysh. It was also the home of the Ka'aba, the most important religious centre of the Arabs.

### **Muhammad**

Muhammad was born in Mecca in A.D. 570, in the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh. An orphan, he was raised by his relatives. At the age of twenty-five, on the recommendation of his uncle, he entered the service of Khadija, a rich widow whom he later married. Entrusted with the supervision of her merchandise, he travelled to Syria. There he encountered communities of Jews and Christians and acquired some knowledge of their faith.

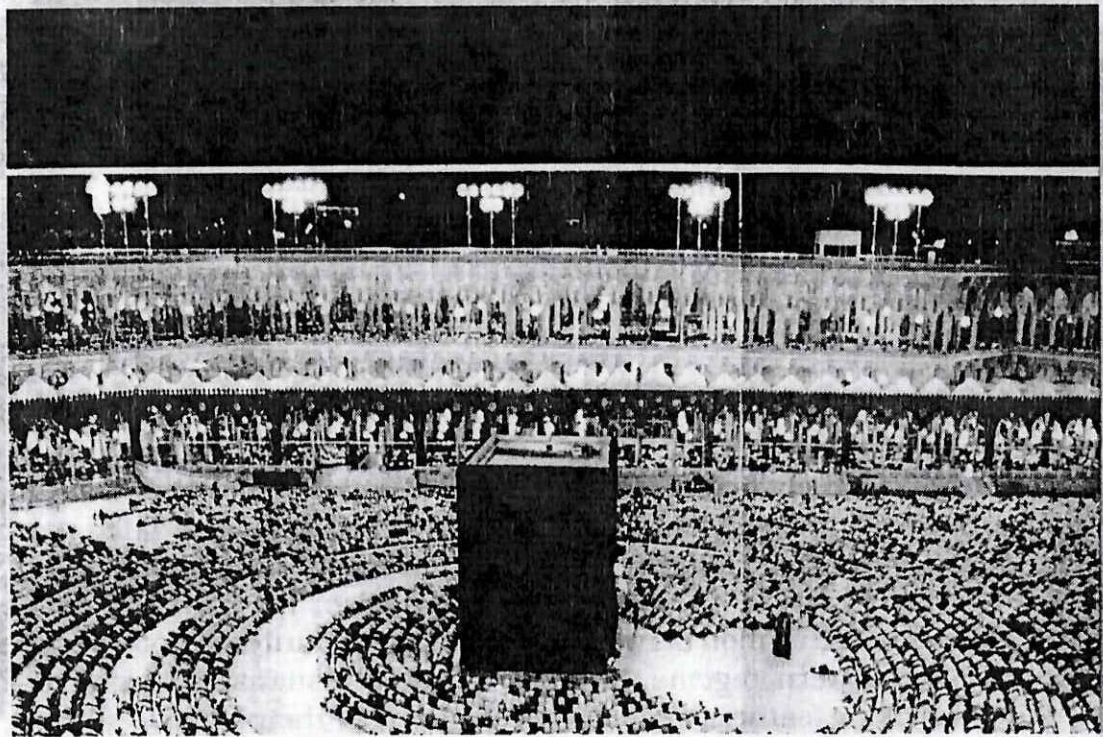
Around the age of forty, Muhammad grew increasingly contemplative. He was also disturbed



by the idolatrous practices of the Meccans. He began to seclude himself in a cave at Hira, where he spent much time in reflection. During one of these retreats, he believed that an Angel appeared to him in a dream and gave him what later became known as the First Revelation. After some time, the Angel again addressed Muhammad, who was now convinced that he was the chosen Messenger of God. The Revelations received by Muhammad were subsequently compiled in a book called the Quran, which along the Hadith (Sayings of the Prophet) is venerated as the supreme source of authority in Islam.

Muhammad's first followers included Khadija, his cousin Ali, and Abu Bakr. The number of disciples soon rose to nearly fifty. But as Muhammad became more vocal against the prevailing religious practices in Mecca, resistance to him grew among the Quraysh.

The fledgling community got a reprieve when some residents of Medina (280 miles north of Mecca) accepted Muhammad's teachings. Muhammad's followers now began to migrate secretly to Medina and soon only Muhammad, Abu Bakr, Ali and their families were left behind in Mecca. Informed about Quraysh plans to slay him, Muhammad left for Mount Saur near



*Pilgrims at Mecca*



Mecca, from where he reached Medina in A.D. 622. Muhammad's migration is known as the *hijra* and the Muslim calendar commences from this year.

Hostilities with the Quraysh resumed in the second year of the *hijra* when a pitched battle was fought at Badr. Muhammad's three hundred-strong group routed a force three times its size. The Battle of Badr, where Muhammad first wielded the sword to assert his Prophethood, is regarded as the most momentous in Islamic history. The victory at Badr was followed by attacks on the Jews and later the Christians, who were charged with falsifying their scriptures to conceal prophecies about Muhammad's advent.

To avenge the defeat at Badr, the Quraysh advanced towards Medina with three thousand men. They fought Muhammad's forces at Uhud, but were not confident enough to press the attack. As after Badr, so after Uhud, Muhammad attacked and expelled a Jewish tribe from Medina. Tensions with the Quraysh continued and in A.D. 627, the Meccans prepared to lay siege on Medina. Muhammad won by the simple expedient of having a ditch dug around the city. This victory was followed by an attack on the Jewish tribe of Quraiza and a subsequent assault on the Jewish oases of Khaibar.

In A.D. 630, Muhammad made a triumphal entry into Mecca. He circumambulated Ka'aba seven times and ordered the removal of 360 idols installed there. The people of Mecca

submitted to Muhammad, and gradually the various tribes of Arabia acknowledged the spiritual and temporal supremacy of the Prophet.

### The New Community

The polity that Muhammad created was based on the twin concepts of *ummah* (the Muslim community of believers) and *jihad*. It had a religious foundation and all its members had to be Muslims. The Prophet's subsequent treaties with the Jews and Christians became the basis of the *dhimmi* system, and reflected the eternal frontier between believers and non-believers.

Islam incorporated the most revered symbols of the Arabs and distanced itself from Judaism and Christianity, the two religions it had to contend with in its homeland. As part of this process, Friday was substituted for Sabbath, *azaan* (call to prayer) for trumpets and gongs, Ramzan designated the holy month, and the *qibla* (direction to be faced during prayer) changed from Jerusalem to Mecca. The ancient practice of pilgrimage to Ka'aba was incorporated in the Islamic ritual. Islam was the first attempt in Arab history at a social formation based on religious rather than blood ties. Scholars have therefore viewed the new religion as a manifestation of Arab nationalism.

The famous five pillars of Islam reinforced the new sense of community. They included acknowledgement of Muhammad as the final Messenger of Allah and acceptance of the Quran as the ultimate and unalterable word of God; *namaz* five times a day with the



face turned towards Ka'aba; *zakat* or charity for the benefit of the Muslim community; fasting during the month of Ramzan, and *Haj* or pilgrimage to Mecca.

### Islam after Muhammad

After the death of Muhammad in A.D. 632, the leadership of the Muslim community devolved, in succession, on the four Patriarchal Caliphs (A.D. 633-61), all close companions of the Prophet. The first major schism within Islam developed in this period over the question of the rightful claimant to the leadership of the community. The Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, was regarded by some as the lawful immediate successor, but could prevail only after Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. However, Ali was subsequently murdered, and his family members and followers perished in the battle of Karbala. Ali's followers are called Shi'is, while Muslims who accept the correctness of the order of succession and constitute the majority, are known as Sunnis.

The Arabs dominated the Umayyad Caliphate (A.D. 661-750) that succeeded the Patriarchal Caliphs. It was followed by the 'Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258), under which a new class of specially trained white slaves, the Mamluks (mostly Central Asians Turks), came to dominate the polity. They infused fresh verve into the Islamic enterprise and considerably extended its sway. During the time of the later Abbasids, the Caliphs began to lose political control and independent Muslim rulers (sultans)

emerged in several regions. The Caliph sanctioned their rule and himself became the titular head of the Islamic realm.

### Arab Expansion

Within a hundred years of Muhammad's death, the Arab armies had humbled the Byzantines and Sassanids and set up an empire greater than that of Rome at the pinnacle of its power. Its sweep extended from the Bay of Biscay to the Indus and the borders of China, from the Aral Sea to the lower Nile, and embraced south-western Europe, northern Africa, and western and Central Asia.

The Arab expansion was notable for the speed with which it was accomplished. Between A.D. 633-637, the Arabs had conquered Syria and Iraq, and between A.D. 639-642, Egypt had also succumbed. Even the mighty Persian Empire fell quickly after the famous battle of Qadisiya in A.D. 637, while the countries of North Africa were subdued within a few decades. The Central Asian regions, inhabited by such reputed warriors as the Turks, Turkomans, Uzbeks and Mongols, were also quickly subdued. By A.D. 712, the Arabs had entered Spain and were soon making inroads into southern France. Analysing Islam's spectacular success, scholars point out that by the eighth century A.D., the Arabs had acquired a core position from Spain to India, connecting the trade of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. They controlled the principal maritime and caravan trade routes,



excluding only the northern trans-Eurasian silk route, and enjoyed economic dominance in the world.

### **The Frontier States of al-Hind**

The battle of Qadisiya brought the Arab armies to the frontiers of al-Hind. The conquest of India, however, proved to be no walkover for the invaders. While they had won relatively easy victories in Christian and Zoroastrian lands, they were checkmated in Sind, Kabul and Zabul, three tiny Hindu kingdoms on the north-western frontier of India, for almost four centuries.

The invasions, which culminated in the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in A.D. 1206, fall broadly into four phases, with the first two overlapping to some extent. The first phase covers the Arab attacks on the western coast of India from A.D. 636-712, while the second includes the Arab and Turkish offensives against the Hindu kingdoms of modern Afghanistan between A.D. 643-870. The third stage, incorporating the Turkish attempts to conquer the Punjab, ends with the death of Mahmud Ghazni, while Muhammad Ghur's conquests between A.D. 1175-1206 bring to a close the fourth phase.

#### **Sind**

The intense Arab engagement on the west coast began with the unsuccessful attempt to conquer Thana near Bombay in A.D. 636, during the Caliphate of Umar. Subsequent expeditions against Broach, the Gulf of Debal (Sind), and Baluchistan (Makran,

Sind), also ended in failure, though the Arabs continued their attacks by land and sea. They focused on the hilly region of Kikana near the Bolan Pass inhabited by the sturdy Jats. It was only in A.D. 712, after over seven decades of dogged resistance, that the Arabs under Muhammad bin Qasim finally succeeded in establishing their rule in Sind. Multan succumbed the following year. Multan's new rulers thwarted attempts by Indian rulers to retake the region by threatening to destroy the famous image of the Sun God revered all over India. The statue was broken in the late tenth century, when the Ismailis occupied Multan.

Sind's collapse after a valourous struggle has been attributed to several internal causes, particularly domestic strife and meagre resources. The Arab forces were vastly superior to those of King Dahir, in numbers and equipment. However, Sind was not wanting in courage, and at Debal, 4,000 troops resisted a far more numerous Arab force. Even so heavily outnumbered, it was the information supplied by a traitor that finally tilted the scales against Sind. After Dahir's death, his widow, and later also his son, continued the resistance.

#### **Kabul, Zabul**

Around the time that the attacks on Sind commenced, a second frontier opened in Kabul (Kapisha) and Zabul (Jabala), then ruled by the Turkshahi and later the Hindushahi dynasties. By the mid-seventh century, the Arabs had occupied the whole of Persia and



extended their empire upto the western frontier of the kingdoms of Kabul and Zabul, which were now subjected to their attacks. Together with Makran, Baluchistan and much of Sind, the regions of Kabul and Zabul formed a frontier zone between India and Persia, though scholars point out that Buddhist and Hindu cultural forms were more dominant. In the time of Ashoka itself, several stupas had come up in the region. The presence of Buddhism in Bamiyan, Kabul and Zabul along the main trade routes is verified by Chinese pilgrims till the seventh century. There is also evidence of Devi cults and the worship of the Saivite god, Zun. The *Chachnama* says that the king of Kashmir had established suzerainty over Zabul.

The Kabul valley and the North-West Frontier Province were ruled till the ninth century A.D. by a family described by Al-Beruni as descendants of Kanishka and known as the Turkshahis. They were dethroned by the Hindushahi dynasty founded by Lalliya Shahi. The Arabs waged an inconclusive struggle in the region for 220 years, which was eventually continued by the Turks. Yaqub ibn Layth, founder of the Saffarid dynasty, finally prevailed by resorting to deception. But Saffarid control over the region remained imperfect till the end of the ninth century, and their governor in Ghazni was expelled by two Indian princes in A.D. 899-900. After Yaqub's seizure of Kabul, the Hindushahis shifted the capital to Udabhandapura, a small village on the right bank of the

Sindhu. (According to Al-Beruni, Lalliya was succeeded by Samand, Kamala, Bhim, Jaipal and other descendants).

Alptigin, a Turkish adventurer who established himself at Ghazni, launched the third phase of the conflict in A.D. 963 with his raids on the Indian frontiers. A successor, Pirai, attacked the territory of the Hindushahi king of Punjab, a policy continued by Subuktigin who became ruler of Ghazni in A.D. 997.

The Hindushahi ruler Jaipal led a counterattack on Ghazni, but retreated on account of a storm. Jaipal then formed a confederacy with the Gurjara Pratihara king of Kanauj and his vassals, the Chahamanas and Chandellas. He was defeated by Subuktigin, who became master of the region upto the Sindhu. Subuktigin's son, Mahmud of Ghazni, finally brought Punjab under control. Thus, from the first Arab foray into Sind to the Turkish conquest of Lahore, it took the invaders nearly four hundred years to establish a foothold in the sub-continent.

The final phase commenced with Muhammad Ghur's Indian ventures and climaxed in the founding of the Delhi Sultanate in A.D. 1206.

#### Rise of Ghaznavids

Subuktigin, the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, was a Turkish slave commander and had led a number of expeditions against the frontier outposts of the Hindushahi dynasty. His son Mahmud Ghazni



invaded India seventeen times. As a reward for his services to Islam, he received the title *Yamin al-Dawla* (Right Hand of the State) from the Abbasid Caliph. His dynasty thus also came to be known as the Yaminis.

#### Mahmud Ghazni

Mahmud Ghazni first encountered the Hindushahi ruler, Jaipal, in A.D. 1001. This was followed by a more decisive battle in 1008-09 at Waihind near Peshawar. Many Rajput rulers aided the Hindushahis, then led by Jaipal's son, Anandpal.

In their long contest with the Turks, the intrepid Hindushahis often shifted their capital (from Udbhandapara to Nandanah) according to the exigencies of the military situation. They expended four generations (Jaipal, Anandpal, Trilochanpal, Bhimpal) in the struggle. The great Al-Beruni was moved to pay them tribute: "the Hindu Sahiya dynasty," he wrote, "is now extinct, and of the whole house there is no longer the slightest remnant in existence. We must say that, in all their grandeur, they never slackened in the ardent desire of doing that which is good and right, that they were men of noble sentiment and noble bearing."

Punjab now passed into the hands of the Ghaznavids. Mahmud's cavalry of mounted archers possibly played a role in tilting the scales in his favour. In the following years, Mahmud attacked Nagarkot, Thanesar, Mathura and Kanauj. Everywhere he ravaged temples, pillaged cities, and collected untold wealth. The attack against

Nagarkot in A.D. 1008 has been described as his first great triumph against idolatry. Thanesar, mentioned in the *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* as an important religious centre, came next. Its chief icon was a nearly life-size bronze of *Chakrasvamin*, which was sent to Ghazni and placed in the hippodrome.

The city of Mathura was particularly endowed with an array of beautiful and imposing temples. Mahmud's court historian, Utbi, has left a vivid description of the extraordinary buildings that Mahmud saw there which, according to some accounts, included one thousand temples. Commenting upon the main temple, Utbi stated that to depict its beauty and decoration, "the pens of all writers and the pencils of all painters would be powerless..." He estimated that the temple would have cost the equivalent of one hundred million dinars and taken at least two hundred years to build. Its five main idols, each five metres high, were made of red gold; one alone had ruby eyes worth fifty thousand dinars.

Kanauj, long revered as the sacred capital of northern India, was the next to suffer Mahmud's onslaught. At the sudden approach of his army, the Pratihara king Rajyapala was taken by surprise and could not offer any resistance. The defenceless residents fled to the temples for refuge. The city was taken in just one day, its temples destroyed and denuded of their treasures and great numbers of the fleeing inhabitants slain.



In 1025, Mahmud embarked on his most memorable Indian campaign, the attack on the Somnath temple in Saurashtra. Somnath was among the most venerated shrines of India, and during lunar eclipses drew as many as two to three lakh pilgrims. The revenues of thousands of villages had been dedicated to its upkeep.

Mahmud captured the city after a grim struggle in which more than fifty thousand defenders lost their lives. According to Al-Beruni, "the image was destroyed by the Prince Mahmud... He ordered the upper part to be broken and the remainder to be transported to his residence, Ghaznin, with all its coverings and trappings of gold, jewels, and embroidered garments. Part of it has been thrown into the hippodrome of the town, together with the Chakrasvamin, the idol of bronze, that had been brought from Thaneshar. Another part of the idol from Somnath lies before the door of the mosque of Ghaznin..." It is said that gold to the tune of 6.5 tonnes accrued to the invader.

So great was the fame of Somnath that its fall was publicised by contemporary and later authors as the greatest victory of Islam over idolatry. It instantly elevated Mahmud to the rank of a hero. For several centuries thereafter, the Hindus repeatedly tried to rebuild the temple, even as a succession of iconoclasts razed it to the ground.

Mahmud left Somnath after a fortnight, when he learnt that the Gujarat king, Bhima I, had completed

preparations to confront him. His soldiers suffered many hardships on the return journey, partly on account of shortage of water and partly due to pressure from the Jats of Sind. Mahmud returned to India one last time to settle scores with the Jats. He died in A.D. 1030.

Commenting on the devastation wrought by Mahmud, Al-Beruni observed that the Hindus "became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions... this is the reason, too, why Hindu scientists have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Banaras, and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources."

In 1030-31, Mahmud's nephew, Sayyid Salar Masud, launched a fresh initiative with an attack on Awadh, which however, failed. In 1033, he reached Bahraich, where the Pasi king Suhel Dev offered stiff resistance. Salar Masud fell fighting with almost all his followers. He was hailed as a *ghazi* and his shrine became an important centre of pilgrimage.

After Mahmud's death, the Ghaznavid empire was confined to Ghazni and Punjab. Though his successors continued to raid India, the Ghaznavids no longer posed a meaningful threat to the country. They were soon overthrown by their vassals, the Ghurids, who came from Ghur, the mountainous region east of Herat.



## **The Ghurids**

### **Muhammad Ghur**

Like Mahmud Ghazni, Muhammad Ghur was confronted by a phalanx of Rajput powers determined to stall his advance into India.

Muhammad Ghur's first invasion was directed against Multan, then ruled by the Ismailis, popularly regarded as heretics in the Muslim world. Both Multan and Uch fell in A.D. 1175 and the subjugation of the whole of Sind was completed in 1182 with the annexation of Lower Sindh. Muhammad's invasion of Gujarat, however, ended in a crushing defeat at the hands of the Chalukyan forces in 1178-79, near Mount Abu.

Muhammad now abandoned plans to conquer India through Sind and Multan, opting instead to proceed through Punjab. A series of invasions finally ended Ghaznavid rule in Punjab and brought Muhammad Ghur into direct confrontation with the valiant Prithviraj Chauhan, who ruled the territory between Delhi and Ajmer. Muhammad was badly routed at Tarain by Prithviraj and his ally, the ruler of Delhi, and barely escaped with his life. Seriously wounded, he was assisted away from the battlefield by one of his Khalji officers. Back home, he made furious preparations to avenge his defeat. In 1192, he led a mighty army into the same field of Tarain, in which he got the better of his Chauhan adversary and even captured Prithviraj. The Ghurid forces occupied Hansi, Kuhram, and Sursuti, though Ajmer was left in possession of Prithviraj. After

his execution, on charges of conspiracy a short while later, Ajmer was conferred on his son. The famous college of Ajmer built by Vigraharaja IV Visaladeva was converted into a mosque by the invading Turks, and became known as the Adhai din ka jhompra.

The Tomars were reinstated in Delhi as tributaries of the Ghurids. But soon afterwards, they were ousted and Delhi made the base for the Turkish advance into the Ganges valley. A Turkish general was installed in Ajmer as well. Prithviraj's son now relocated himself at Ranthambor, where he founded a strong Chauhan kingdom.

In 1194 Muhammad Ghur marched against Jaichandra, the Gahadavala king of Kanauj. Jaichandra's vigorous defence perplexed the invading army, till an arrow hit him, leading to his death. Immediately after the victory at Chandawar, Muhammad Ghur looted the Gahadavala treasury, occupied the holy city of Banaras and desecrated its temples. Subsequently, he won the fortress of Thangir from the Chandellas and accepted tribute from the ruler of Gwalior. After 1203, however, following the death of his brother, Muhammad Ghur left India in the charge of his Turkish slave commanders.

Qutbuddin Aibak, his premier slave, was responsible for a string of Ghurid conquests. Apart from thwarting an attempt at Chauhan revival by Prithviraj's brother, Hariraj, Aibak occupied Delhi and defeated the Chalukyas at Mount Abu, thus avenging Muhammad Ghur's



humiliation two decades earlier. Despite the Turkish victory, the Chalukyas retained control of their kingdom till as late as A.D. 1240. Aibak also took advantage of the declining power of the Gahadavalas to occupy Meerut, Aligarh, Badaun, and Kanauj. Gwalior surrendered to him and he took possession of Kalinjar, the Chandella capital after fierce resistance by the chief minister of the kingdom.

Meanwhile, another slave, Bakhtiyar Khalji began raiding the province of Bihar. In one such expedition he reached as far as Uddandapur Vihara, a university town inhabited by Buddhist monks. It was destroyed, as were the famous monasteries of Nalanda and Vikramsila. Encouraged, he planned the conquest of Bengal, then ruled by the aged Lakshmanasena. Disguised as a horse dealer, he burst upon the unsuspecting ruler at Nadia. Bakhtiyar Khalji established himself at Lakhnauti while Lakshmanasena continued to rule in eastern Bengal.

Muhammad Ghur died in 1206 without a male heir and his relatives and slaves fought over his vast territories. His senior slave, Tajuddin Yalduz, occupied Ghazni while Aibak took charge of the Indian possessions.

#### Causes of Turkish Success

Some modern historians attribute the Turkish success to the internal weaknesses of Hindu society. They depict the caste system as having played a crucial role in this regard. It is said to have restricted participation in warfare

to the Kshatriyas, and thereby militarily enfeebled the Hindus and inhibited unity among them. Islam's message of social equality, they say, won over large numbers of discontented Hindus who crossed over to the side of the conquerors. But this explanation fails to account for the swift collapse of the mighty Persian and Byzantine empires where caste was not a social reality. Nor is the caste factor corroborated by contemporary medieval sources.

Furthermore, the argument fails to note that recruitment to Hindu armies was never the preserve of Kshatriyas. Peasants routinely served as soldiers, especially during non-harvest seasons, a practice which continued till the colonial period when the British for the first time disarmed the Hindu peasantry. The Kshatriya *varna* moreover had always been an open-ended category; any enterprising leader who acquired political power could claim Kshatriya rank. Throughout Indian history, several powerful agricultural and tribal groups took this route to Kshatriya status. As for the Rajputs, they were by no means a closed unit, and well into the British period married into armed groups like the Pasis to augment their military might.

Two other points are in order. First, there is no evidence of large-scale conversions to Islam in the twelfth century. Secondly, there is nothing to show that Islam mitigated social discrimination against the erstwhile low caste Hindus converts. Certainly they did not regard the converts as social equals.



The Arab conquerors of early Islam were also not known for enforcing equality in the areas they subjugated in Asia and Africa. In fact, they had developed a highly refined system of racial discrimination, as is evident in the slave trade. Initially, including both White and Black slaves, it was subsequently confined mainly to Blacks. Moreover, White slaves, designated Mamluks, were entrusted with high office. They could become governors, generals, and even sovereigns. Black slaves, however, were used mostly for hard labour.

Modern research has explained the Turkish success to some possible advantage in military technology. Ghur was rich in metal deposits and famous for its manufacture of weapons and coats-of-mail, and assured the Turks a steady supply of armaments. Contemporary chroniclers refer to the Turkish armies' use of the crossbow

(*nawak*) and its ability to pierce armour. The effective use of cavalry, coupled with swift, surprise attacks, seems to have contributed to the Turkish victories. The Ghurid army at Tarain consisted largely of heavy cavalry, and was a formidable 1,20,000-strong. Superior military tactics could also have played a role in the Turkish triumph. The Indian princes, on the other hand, were still wedded to age-old techniques of pitched warfare and the formation of the four-fold army, and were no match for the ferocity and determination of the invaders.

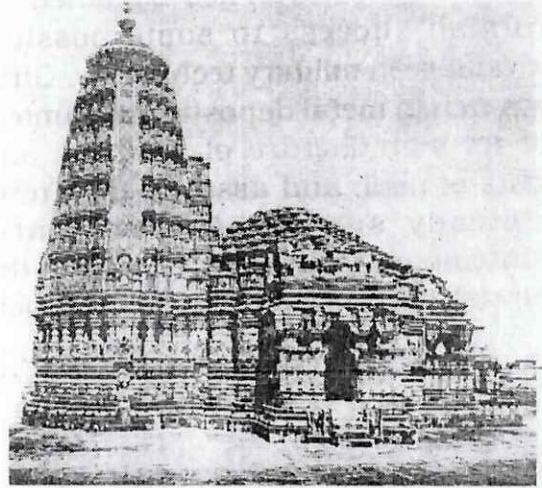
The Ghurids also enhanced their strength by recruiting warriors from Khurasan, Ghuzz and Khalaj, all of whom participated in significant numbers in the battle of Tarain. There are also references to Afghans joining the war. The Ghurids additionally collected a large band of Turkish slaves.

## Exercises

1. Give a brief account of the land and people of Arabia.
2. Briefly describe the invasions of Mahmud Ghazni in India.
3. List the major causes of the Turkish success in India.
4. Write short notes on:
  - a) The five pillars of Islam
  - b) The Arab engagement in Sind
  - c) Kabul and Zabul
  - d) The Somnath temple

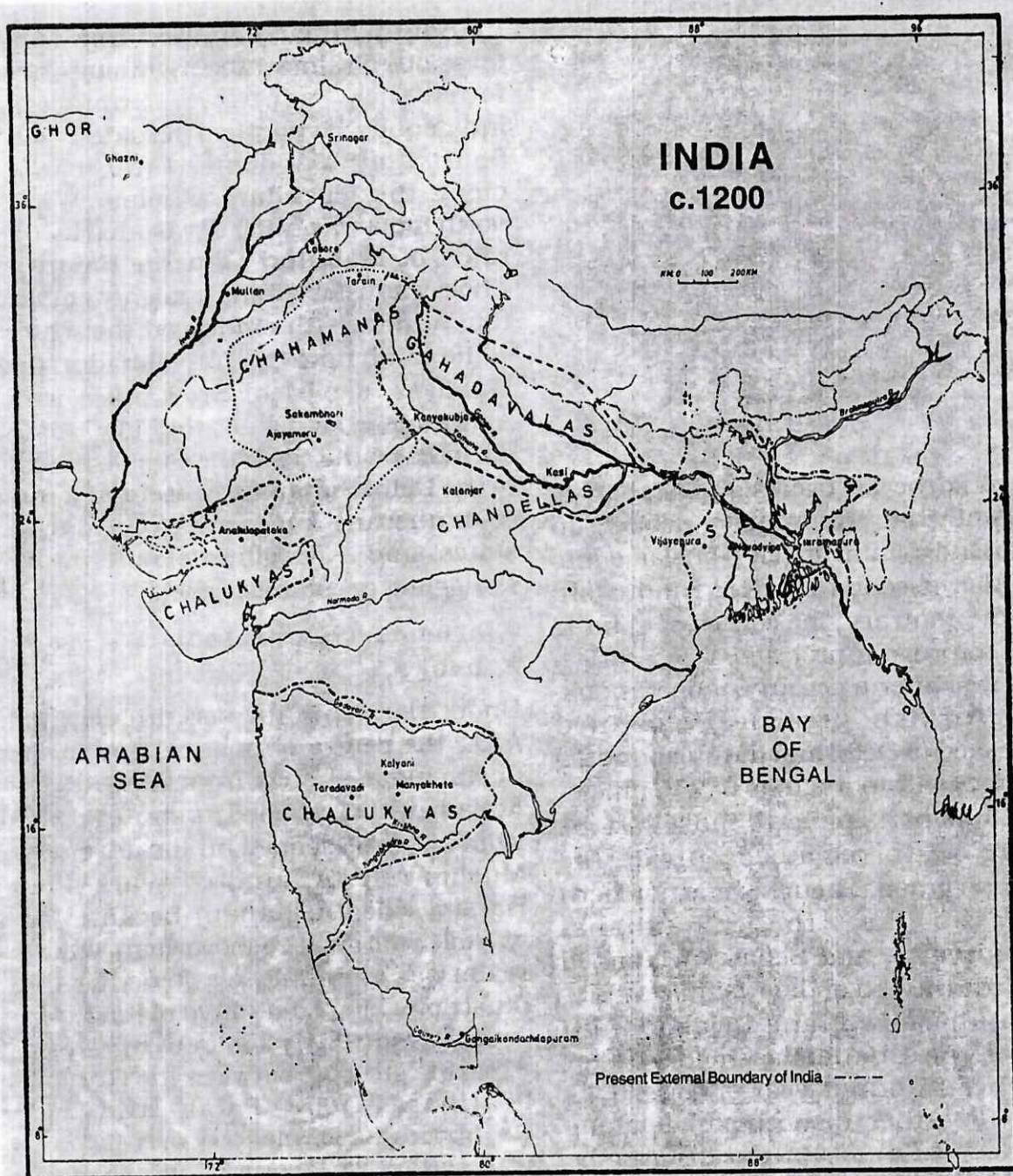
# 4 CHAPTER

## THE INDIAN KINGDOMS



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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.





It would be an over-simplification to assume that the military debacle in north India immediately translated into Turkish ascendancy over Hindustan. On the contrary, the conquest of India was to prove a protracted enterprise, and well after a century of operations, the Turkish presence remained restricted to Delhi and the surrounding districts within a radius of 250 miles.

Large parts of north India and the entire south remained outside the Turkish grasp. Though some northern powers like the Chauhans, Gahadavalas, and Senas succumbed towards the end of the twelfth century, Gujarat, Malwa, and Jejakabhukti under the Chandellas held out for another hundred years. The Turks were altogether unsuccessful in taking Orissa, while Assam could never be subdued by the invaders. Rajputana was an unfaltering arena of resistance throughout the Sultanate period; in the mid-fifteenth century it opened yet another glorious chapter of struggle under Maharana Kumbha.

South India remained free from invasions till almost the beginning of the fourteenth century. Numerous indigenous dynasties presided over flourishing kingdoms, the greatest being the legendary Cholas. When north India was being devastated by the raids of Mahmud Ghazni, Rajaraja Chola was establishing a mighty empire that at his death embraced the whole of the south upto the Tungabhadra, the Maldives, a part of Sri Lanka, with Andhradesa as a feudatory ally. All in all, India on the eve of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate presented a mix of exuberant and ambitious native states, and a fledgling Islamic power struggling to establish itself.

### Kingdoms of North India

#### Kanauj

Under Harsha in the seventh century A.D., the centre of political gravity in north India shifted from Magadh to Kanauj, which retained its strategic and symbolic significance till the advent of Muslim rule. A hundred years after Harsha's death, Kanauj became the capital of the great Yashovarman, whose realm was eventually weakened by the illustrious king Lalitaditya of Kashmir.

Subsequently, a century-long tripartite struggle between the Gurjara Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rashtrakutas for mastery over Kanauj was settled in favour of the Gurjara Pratiharas, who maintained their hold on the kingdom for almost two centuries. The greatest scion of the dynasty was Bhoja, also known as Mihir Bhoja to differentiate him from the Paramara ruler of the same name.



The last king of that dynasty to preside over Kanauj was Rajyapala. He was killed by the Chandella king Vidyadhara for failing to resist Mahmud Ghazni's invasion of the city and thus deviating from the path of his ancestors. Rajyapala's successors, however, continued to rule from Bari, situated roughly thirty miles east of Kanauj.

An eleventh century inscription links a Rashtrakuta dynasty with Kanauj. It is possible that the Rashtrakutas established their control over the city during the confusion that followed Mahmud Ghazni's attack. Subsequently, the dynasty appears to have settled at Vodamayuta, or modern Budaun, which soon grew in stature.

In the latter half of the eleventh century, the Gahadavalas came to power in Kanauj. Some scholars are of the view that the Gahadavalas were a branch of the Rashtrakutas or Rathors. The founder of the dynasty, Chandradeva, is described in his inscriptions as the protector of the holy sites of Kusika (Kanauj), Kasi, Uttara Kosala (Ayodhya) and Indrasthan (Delhi), which indicates that his jurisdiction extended over almost the entire present-day Uttar Pradesh. Kasi was the second capital of the Gahadavalas.

Govindachandra was the next important ruler of this line. He expanded the kingdom at the expense of the declining Palas of Bengal. Both he and his son, Vijayachandra, repulsed a number of Turkish invasions. One of the most important

books on law, the *Kritya-Kalpataru* was written in Govindachandra's reign. He appears to have been on intimate terms with the Cholas, as an incomplete inscription engraved in stone has been discovered in the Chola capital recording the genealogy of the Gahadavala kings.

The last king of this house, Jaichandra, lost his life combating Muhammad Ghur. But the Turks do not appear to have kept the conquered territory for long, as Jaichandra's son, Harishchandra, is known to have been in possession of the Kanauj, Jaunpur and Mirzapur districts in 1197. The accounts of Muslim historians support the view that Kanauj was not won till the reign of Iltutmish (1210-1236), who also had to re-conquer Varanasi.

#### The Chandellas of Jejakabhukti or Bundelkhand

The Chandellas were included among the thirty-six Rajput clans and claimed descent from the sage Chandratreya. Starting out as feudatories of the Gurjara Pratiharas, they became an independent power under Yasovarman, who made extensive conquests in northern India. His son, Dhanga, further extended the kingdom at the cost of the Pratiharas and also attacked Pala territories in the east. Dhanga aided the Shahi ruler, Jaipal, against Subuktigin. He lived for more than a hundred years and ended his life in Allahabad while meditating upon Siva.

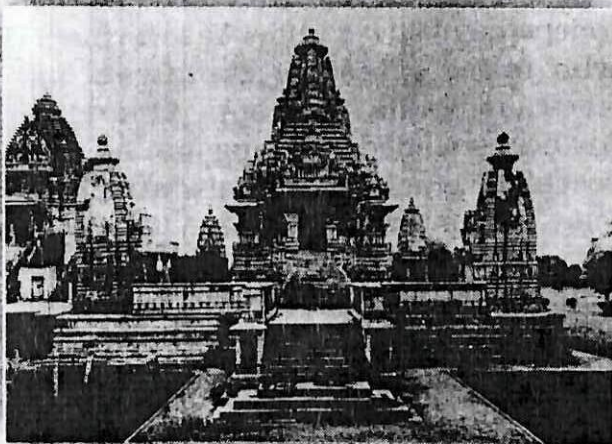
His son, Ganda, helped Jaipal's son, Anandpal, against Mahmud Ghazni. Ganda's son, Vidyadhara, was the



greatest of Chandella kings. He killed the last Pratihara ruler of Kanauj for surrendering to Mahmud Ghazni without a fight. Muslim chroniclers describe Vidyadhara as the most powerful ruler of India, possessing an incredibly large army.

In the reign of Paramardi (1165-1203), the Chandella kingdom suffered a defeat at the hands of the Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj III, who raided the capital city of Mahoba. More serious was the attack of Qutbuddin Aibak on Kalinjar. After some resistance, Paramardi agreed to pay tribute. His minister, Ajayadeva, disapproved of the agreement, killed Paramardi, and renewed the fight against Aibak. But he himself was forced to surrender after a valiant struggle, due to shortage of water in the fort.

The Turks, however, do not appear to have succeeded in keeping Kalinjar for long. Sometime before 1205, Paramardi's son inflicted a severe defeat on the Muslim forces and recovered Kalinjar.



*Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, Chandella period*



*Khajuraho, Kandariya Mahadeva temple, A.D. 1025-1035, Chandella period*

There are references to a king of the dynasty ruling in Bundelkhand in 1315. The fort of Kalinjar remained with native rulers till 1545, when Sher Shah was killed accidentally while trying to capture it and the Afghans stormed their way in.

The Chandellas were great builders. They are best remembered for the magnificent temples they raised at their capital, Kharjuravahaka (Khajuraho), in Madhya Pradesh.

### **The Paramaras of Malwa**

According to available evidence, the Paramaras were originally vassals of the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and emerged as an independent power in the second half of the tenth century. Starting from Ujjain, they later shifted their capital to Dhar. The first notable Paramara ruler was Vakpati Munja,



who ruled towards the end of the tenth century and is hailed as one of the greatest generals of his age. He was a generous patron of art and literature, and a number of poets like Dhananjaya, Halayudha, Dhanika and Padmagupta graced his court. He also excavated a number of tanks and built several splendid temples.

Bhoja, who ascended the throne around the beginning of the eleventh century, was the most eminent ruler of the dynasty. One of the greatest kings of medieval India, he was a rare combination of a military and literary genius. Paramara power reached its zenith during his long reign of more than fifty years.

In 1008, he sent an army to assist Anandpal against Mahmud Ghazni. Subsequently, around 1019, he provided shelter to Anandpal's son, Trilochanpal, when the latter was under pressure from Mahmud. In 1043, he joined a confederacy of native chiefs that conquered Hansi, Thanesar, Nagarkot

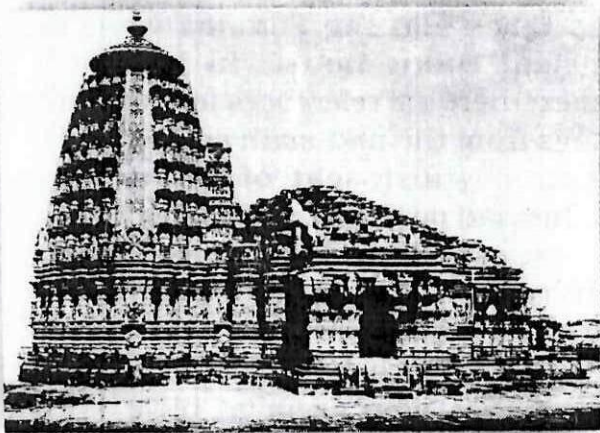
and other areas from the Turks and even besieged the fort of Lahore. But, like several kings of his time, Bhoja constantly fought his neighbouring kings. Though successful at first, luck eventually deserted him, and his once flourishing empire, came under attack from both the Chalukya and Kalachuri forces.

Bhoja was a reputed scholar who authored almost two dozen works on subjects as varied as medicine, astronomy, religion and architecture. He established a Sanskrit college within the precincts of the Saraswati temple and invited men of letters like Dhanapala and Uvrata to his court. He founded the city of Bhojapur near Bhopal and built a number of temples in honour of Siva.

The attacks of the Chalukyas continued to weaken the Paramara kingdom after Bhoja, even as the Sultans of Delhi commenced their campaigns against the state. The last Paramara ruler was defeated by the forces of Alauddin Khalji.

### **The Chahamanas or Chauhans of Sakambhari**

The Chauhans were an old and distinguished ruling house who made their political debut as vassals of the Gurjara Pratiharas and ruled over parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan in the seventh and eighth centuries. There were several branches of the Chauhan family, the most well-known being the Chauhans of Sakambhari, after their capital (modern Sambhar) in the Ajmer district of Rajasthan.



*Udayesvara Temple, A.D. 1070-1080,  
Paramara Period*



Prominent kings of this dynasty include Ajayaraja, who recaptured Nagor from the Yaminis and prevented a further Ghaznavid advance. In the early twelfth century, he founded the city of Ajayameru (Ajmer), better situated for defence purposes than Sambhar, the old capital. Some of his coins carry the name of his queen, Somaladevi.

His son, Arnoraja, also scored a decisive victory over the Yaminis, who had advanced upto Ajmer. He was married to the daughter of the Chalukya ruler, Jayasimha Siddharaja of Gujarat, and the great Prithviraj III was his grandson.

It was Arnoraja's son, Vighraharaja IV Visaladeva, whose known dates range from 1153-1163, who transformed the Chauhan kingdom into an empire. He conquered Delhi and Hansi, besides attacking Chalukya territories in Rajasthan. He is described as having freed Aryavarta from the invaders. Though this seems an exaggeration, it cannot be doubted that he registered significant victories over the Yaminis.

Besides being an able warrior, Vighraharaja IV Visaladeva was a man of letters and a patron of literature. Fragments of his drama, the *Harakeli*, have been found engraved on stone in Ajmer. The historical drama, *Lalita-Vighraharaja*, written by his court poet, Somadeva, has been similarly discovered. Vighraharaja IV Visaladeva was a great builder and founded many townships. The mosque, Adhai din ka jhompra at Ajmer, was originally a college constructed by him.

Prithviraj III was the last ruler of this house. He has been immortalised by the poet Chandbardai in the epic *Prithviraja Raso*, though another biographical work, *Prithviraja-vijaya*, is regarded as a more authentic account of his reign. A minor, when he ascended the throne, Prithviraj commenced his reign attacking powerful neighbouring kingdoms like Kanauj, Gujarat, and the Chandella territory, without any appreciable gain. His greatest challenge came from Muhammad Ghur. The dynasty went into decline after his defeat at the second battle of Tarain and his execution shortly thereafter when he was barely thirty years of age.

Branches of the Chauhans also ruled at Ranthambhor, Nadol, and Jalor. Ajmer and Jalor were captured by Alauddin Khalji in the early fourteenth century.

### **The Kalachuris of Tripuri**

The Kalachuris (also known as Katasuris, Haihayas and Chedis) whose legendary early history is mentioned in the Epics and the *Puranas* were an ancient ruling house. In historical times, there are references to Kalachuri kings from the mid-sixth century A.D. Their earliest seat of power was Mahismati on the Narmada.

An early Kalachuri king, Kokalla, who ruled in the mid-ninth century was among the great warriors of his age. He is credited with having defeated the Turushkas who seem to have been Turkish troops of the ruler of Sind. He was married to a Chandella princess. He was succeeded by a number of able



rulers but the dynasty went into decline in the last quarter of the tenth century. The famous poet Rajasekhara lived in the Kalachuri court.

The Kalachuris again acquired power and prestige under Gangeyadeva, who ascended the throne in 1015 in the region around Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. Besides incursions against Orissa, Anga and Banaras, there are also references to his attack

fact that Banaras and Allahabad constituted parts of his kingdom and that he was also in occupation of West Bengal for a while. In addition, he led successful expeditions against Kalinga and Conjeevaram. He allied with the Chalukya king against Malwa.

The last known king of this house is believed to have ruled towards the end of the twelfth century. A branch of the Kalachuris established a kingdom

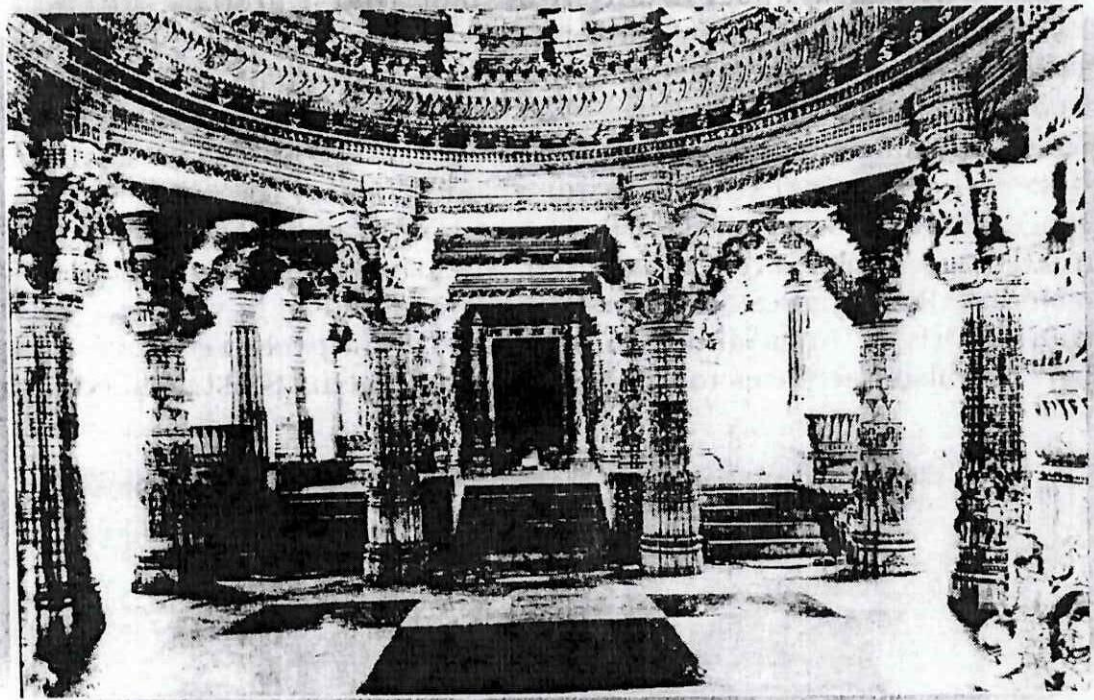


*Sabha Mandap of Sun Temple, Modhera, Gujarat, Solanki Period*

on Kira (Kangra valley) which was then part of the Ghaznavid province of Punjab. He was succeeded by his son, Karna, the greatest ruler of this dynasty and one of the most renowned generals of his age. His inscriptions attest to the

in Bilaspur district of Madhya Pradesh in the early eleventh century. Petty Kalachuri chiefs also ruled in the Kasia region of Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.





Mount Abu, Luna Vasahi temple, interior of Sabha Mandap, A.D. 1230, Solanki Period

### The Chalukyas of Gujarat

The Chalukyas or Solankis ruled over Gujarat for almost three and a half centuries (950-1300). During the reign of Bhima I (1022-1064), Mahmud Ghazni invaded Gujarat and ravaged the temple of Somnath. Bhima was succeeded by his son, Karna, whose principal achievement was the annexation of Lata (south Gujarat). He is also said to have conquered large parts of Malwa in association with the western Chalukya ruler.

Jayasimha Siddharaja, who ascended the throne in 1092-93, consolidated and considerably expanded the kingdom of Gujarat. He subdued the Chauhans of Sakambhari,

but gave his daughter to its defeated ruler, Arnoraja.

Thereafter, Siddharaja turned against the Paramaras of Malwa. By 1137, he had conquered enough of that kingdom to assume the title of Avantinath (Lord of Malwa). This extended the Gujarat frontier upto the Chandella kingdom and led to inevitable conflicts between the two powers.

Jayasimha Siddharaja was a devotee of Siva and built the Rudra-Mahakala temple at Siddhapura. He was a patron of the famous Jain scholar, Hemachandra. He also set up institutions for the study of *jyotisha*, *nyaya* and the *Puranas*. Siddharaja had no son, and was succeeded by



Kumarapala, renowned as the last great royal proponent of Jainism. The invasion of Muhammad Ghur took place in the reign of his minor grandson. The regent queen herself led the defending army and inflicted a defeat on the Turkish forces near Mount Abu.

The Vaghela chiefs established an independent principality between the Sabarmati and Narmada in the mid-thirteenth century. Karna II, who faced Alauddin Khalji's armies, was the last Hindu king of Gujarat.

#### Kashmir

In Kashmir, the Karkota dynasty, which boasted of rulers like Lalitaditya Muktapida and Jayapida Vinyaditya, was supplanted by the Utpalas in the mid-ninth century. The founder of the dynasty, Avantivarman, was a man of sagacity who restored peace and order in the region and commissioned an engineering operation for the drainage and irrigation of the valley. This

provided much relief from floods, besides increasing the land under cultivation. The project was executed by Surya, after whom the town of Suryapura is named. Avantivarman also founded the town of Avantipur and built a number of imposing temples.

His successors, however, were weak and inept and power eventually fell in the hands of a group of Tantrin soldiers (the Praetorian guards) who functioned as kingmakers. In the mid-tenth century the famous queen Didda (grand-daughter of the Shahi king Bhim) emerged as a powerful figure. Her tumultuous reign, wracked by incessant rebellions and revolts against her prime minister Tunga, eventually made way for the Lohara dynasty.

The dynasty finally came to an end in 1172. It was followed by almost two centuries of anarchy, and finally, in 1339, Shah Mir deposed Queen Kota, widow of the last Hindu ruler, Udayana Deva.

#### Exercises

Which dynasties ruled over Kanauj in the eleventh and twelfth centuries?

Write short notes on:

- The Gahadavalas
- The Chandellas
- Bhoja Paramara
- Prithviraj III
- Jayasimha Siddharaja

Match the following:

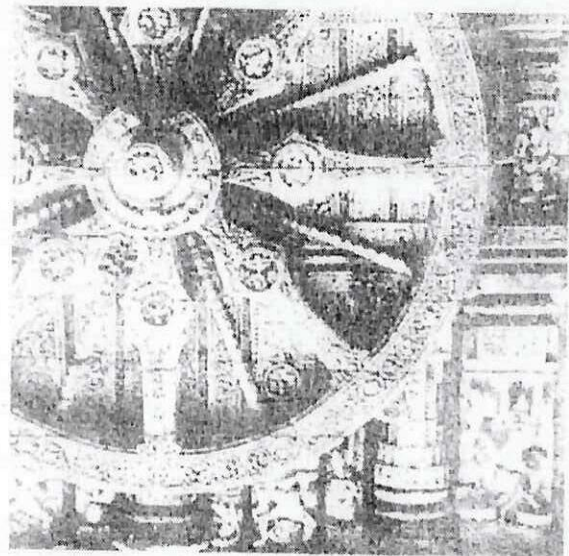
- |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) Vighraharaja IV Visaladeva     | the Kalachuri dynasty       |
| b) Avantivarman                   | wrote the <i>Harakeli</i>   |
| c) Karna was the greatest king of | built the Khajuraho temples |
| d) The Chandellas                 | founded the Utpala dynasty  |

On the map of India, mark the kingdoms of the Chauhans, the Gahadavalas, and the Chandellas.



# 5

## NORTH-EASTERN AND EASTERN STATES







**New** and vibrant kingdoms thrived in the eastern regions as well. The rulers of Assam worsted the marching Khalji armies, as Orissa repulsed several invasions. Bengal witnessed a cultural renaissance under the Palas and Senas, before finally succumbing to the Turkish forces.

#### Assam

After the death of Bhaskaravarman, Kamarupa was occupied by Salastambha. Not much is known about him or his successors. In the early ninth century a new dynasty came to power under Pralambha. The region appears to have been conquered by the Pala king Devapala around this time, but soon regained its autonomy. The Pralambha dynasty remained in power till about A.D. 1000.

The king of Pragjotish (Kamarupa) in the first part of the eleventh century was Brahmapala, who is said to have ruled from his capital Durjaya, which has been identified with Gauhati by scholars.

An unidentified king of Assam repulsed the attack of Bakhtiyar Khalji, the conqueror of Bengal, in which the latter suffered severe losses. The entire region of Kamarupa rose against the invader. The local populace destroyed food and fodder to deprive the intruders of any form of sustenance. Most of Khalji's army perished, there being not more than a hundred survivors out of an army of ten thousand horse. Subsequent Muslim invasions of Assam are also recorded, but seem to have ended in failure.

Meanwhile, in the mid-thirteenth century, the Ahoms, a branch of the Shan tribe settled in eastern Assam, established a kingdom and gave the name Assam to the region.

#### Bengal

After a string of eminent rulers like Dharmapala, Devapala, and Narayanapala, the Pala empire fell into decline, with its sway confined to western and southern Bengal. In A.D. 988, another powerful prince, Mahipala I, ascended the throne. Under his stewardship Pala power revived somewhat, only to go down irretrievably under his successors. Pala rule, however, continued over parts of south Bihar till the last quarter of the twelfth century. Bengal during these decades was also jolted by the Kaivarta revolt.

In east Bengal, the Varmans, professing links with the Yadavas of antiquity, came to power in the second quarter of the eleventh century. They were replaced by the Senas.



The Senas described themselves as Karnata-Kshatriyas, Brahma-Kshatriyas and Kshatriyas and claimed descent from the kings of Dakshinapatha. This has led scholars to speculate that they may have come from the Kannada-speaking region of the south. Since the Palas employed several Karnatas, it is possible that an ancestor of the Senas, hailing from the Deccan, accepted their service and his successors settled in Radha (Burdwan, Bengal). Alternatively, they could have accompanied a Chalukya ruler who invaded Bengal and settled there.

Vijayasena, who came to power in 1095 and ruled for almost sixty years, was among the eminent kings of the Sena dynasty. The Deopara Prasasti inscription provides us with details of his reign. He built the Pradyumnesvara Siva Temple in Rajshahi district.

He was succeeded by the famous Ballalasena (1158-1179). Ballalasena was a man of learning, had studied the Puranas and Smritis, and was an author of repute. He composed a work on Smriti and another on astronomy, which was completed by his son. The introduction of the social system known as *kulinism* is traditionally attributed to him, though this is not corroborated by contemporary evidence.

His son, Lakshmanasena, was the last Hindu ruler of Bengal. He attained notable victories against the Gahadavalas and also controlled a large part of Bihar where an era known after him as Lakshmana Samvat was current. He was forced to leave his

capital, Nadia (renamed Lakhnauti) after its take over by Bakhtiyar Khalji, though the denouement can be explained by circumstances and his advanced age. The popular impression of him as a coward who lost to eighteen Khalji horsemen seems unjustified.

Lakshmanasena was a gifted writer and poet, and his reign was a period of cultural magnificence. Literary celebrities like Jayadeva, composer of the *Gita Govinda*, Halayudha and Sridharadasa adorned his court. Sanskrit literature in Bengal is said to have been at its brightest in the decades preceding the Turkish invasion.

However, east Bengal (Vanga) and probably also south Bengal remained in Sena hands. From the available accounts it appears that the descendants of Lakshmanasena continued to occupy the throne of Vanga at least upto the mid-thirteenth century, when they were supplanted by the Deva dynasty, which ruled till the latter part of the thirteenth century.

### Orissa, Kalinga

In the mid-seventh century Orissa was ruled by Sainyabhita Madhavavarman (also called Srinivasa), a powerful king of the Shailodbhava dynasty who performed the *asvamedha* sacrifice. Though the family went into decline after him, Shailodbhava rule continued till the mid-eighth century. Several dynasties ruled Orissa in the ensuing two centuries, among them the Karas and several branches of the Bhanjas. The names of at least five female rulers





*Lingaraja temple, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, mid-eleventh century*

of the Kara dynasty have come down to us. Among the Bhanjas, the most important families were the Khijinga and the Khinjali.

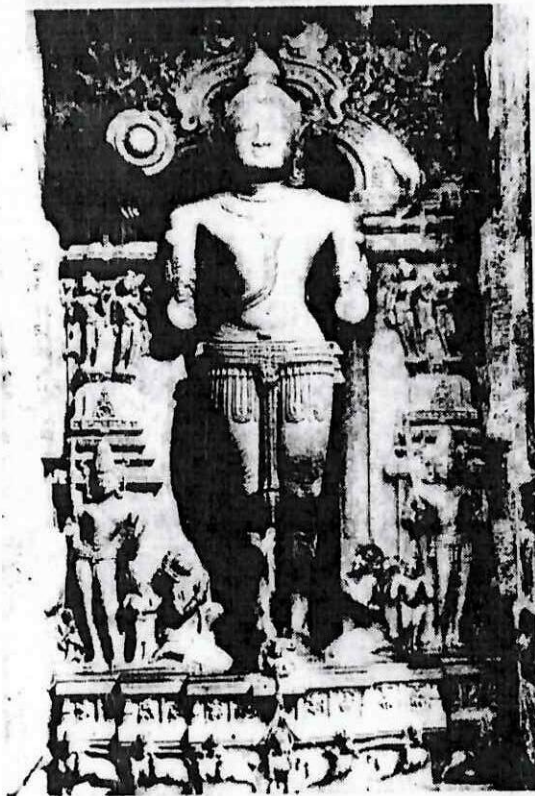
Of the dynasties that subsequently ruled over parts of Orissa were the Kesaris of Bhubaneswar and the Eastern Gangas of Kalinganagara. The former were followers of Siva and built magnificent temples at Bhubaneswar, including the famous Lingaraja temple.

The Eastern Gangas who had established themselves in Kalinga, were originally a branch of the Gangas of Mysore. They had their main capital at Kalinganagara (Ganjam district), with a subsidiary one at Dantapura (Palur).

Their charters begin with homage to Gokarnesvara Siva on Mahendra mountain.

In the eleventh century, another Ganga family came into prominence in the region. It was called the Later Eastern Gangas to differentiate it from the earlier rulers of the same name. The dynasty reached its apogee under Anantavarman Chodaganga, so-called because his mother was the daughter of Rajendra Chola. Anantavarman succeeded his father in A.D. 1078, and ruled for almost seventy years, till the mid-twelfth century. He is said to have built the famous temple of Jagannath at Puri. Though he faced a Chola





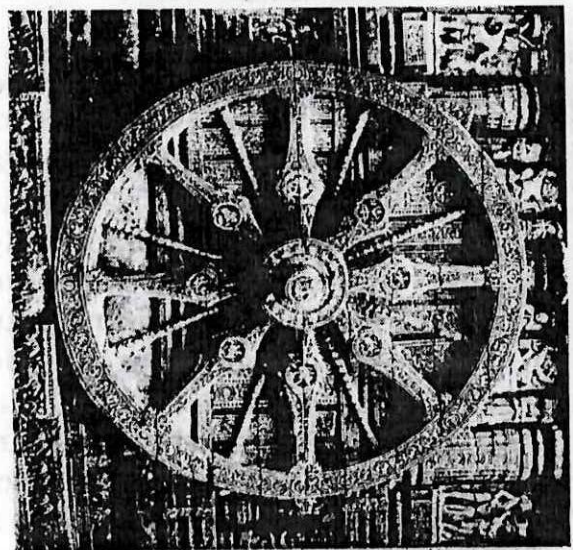
*Surya, Sun temple, Konarak, Orissa*

invasion at the beginning of his reign, he not only recovered his territory, but annexed some Chola land, from where he was in turn expelled.

By uniting Utkal and Kalinga, he is credited with laying the foundation of modern Orissa. He availed of the break-up of the Pala kingdom to advance through the Hooghly, upto the Ganges, a frontier maintained by Orissa kings till the sixteenth century. Anantavarman Chodaganga's records describe his kingdom as stretching from "Ganga to Godavari," a feat revived by the Gajapati kings.

Around this time Orissa had to face a number of invasions from Bengal. The first was sanctioned by Bakhtiyar Khalji, who had overwhelmed the Sena dynasty of Bengal. The incursion, however, ended in failure as did an ensuing one led by Ghiyasuddin Iwaz.

Another distinguished ruler of the dynasty was Narasimha I (1238-1264), the builder of the Sun temple at Konarak. He adopted a forward policy and invaded Bengal, advancing to the very gates of the capital. This enabled Orissa to retain its independence till the mid-sixteenth century, though it suffered a series of attacks from Sultanate rulers. In the mid-fifteenth century, a new royal family, the Suryavamsas, came to power in Kalinga.



*Wheel on plinth of Sun temple, Konarak, Orissa, Ganga period*



**Exercises**

Match the following:

- |                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a) Kamarupa was also known as | built the Jagannath temple            |
| b) Bakhtiyar Khalji           | Pragjotish                            |
| c) Lakshmanasena              | were a branch of the Shan tribe.      |
| d) The Eastern Gangas         | was unsuccessful in conquering Assam. |
| e) Ahoms                      | were a ruling family of Orissa.       |
| f) Ballalasena                | was a famous Sena king.               |
| g) Shailodbhava               | was the last Hindu ruler of Bengal.   |

Write short notes on:

- a) Pala patronage of art and religion
- b) Anantavarman Chodaganga
- c) Narasimha I



# 6

## THE DECCAN AND THE SOUTH







In the Deccan and the far south the Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Yadavas, the Kakatiyas, the Cholas, the Hoysalas and the Later Pandyas all contributed to the dynamism of the era. Besides pursuing aggressive expansionist programmes, they assiduously promoted cultural and religious flowering in their realms.

### **Chalukyas of Kalyani**

In the third quarter of the tenth century, after a long and distinguished innings of over two centuries, the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan made way for the Chalukyas. Also known as the Western Chalukyas, the new ruling house set up its capital at Kalyani (Karnataka). The founder of the dynasty, Taila II (A.D. 973-997) made extensive conquests and defeated a number of neighbouring powers, like the Gangas of Mysore, the Paramaras of Malwa, the Chalukyas of Gujarat and the Kalachuris of Chedi. But the most

momentous development of his reign was the beginning of a prolonged contest with the Cholas, who, under Rajaraja the Great, had also embarked upon a similar expansionist drive. The Chalukya-Chola duel was to become a conspicuous feature of this period.

Subsequent Chalukya rulers like Satyasraya and Jayasimha II faced repeated attacks from the Cholas, after which the Tungabhadra was tacitly acknowledged as marking the border between the two kingdoms. Chola invasions however continued in the reign of Somesvara.

The most distinguished Chalukya ruler was Vikramaditya VI (A.D. 1076-1126), who introduced the Chalukya-Vikram era in place of the Saka era. He successfully fought the Cholas, and his own numerous feudatories. But despite being defeated, the feudatories finally asserted their independence three decades after Vikramaditya's death.

Vikramaditya VI's court was graced by scholars like Bilhana, composer of the Vikramanankadevacharita and Vijnaneshvara, author of the Mitakshara, a commentary on the Yajnavalkya Smriti. Vijnaneshvara wrote of the king: "Neither there was, nor is, nor will be on this earth a ruler like king Vikramarka of Kalayanapura and we have not heard nor seen anyone like him."

By the mid-twelfth century the Chalukya kingdom had almost ceased to exist, and its place was taken by the Kakatiyas of Warangal, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, and the Yadavas of Devagiri.



### The Eastern Chalukyas

The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi served as protectorates of the Cholas for long periods till finally with the accession of Koluttunga, Vengi was united with the Chola empire.

### The Yadavas of Devagiri

The Yadavas, who claimed to belong to the Yadu family of Lord Krishna, are believed to have been an indigenous Maratha group who were originally feudatories of the Rastrakutas, and thereafter, of the Western Chalukyas. They became prominent in the twelfth century under Bhillama V, who established the Yadava kingdom and assumed imperial titles. He annexed a large part of the disintegrating Western Chalukya empire, which brought him into conflict with the Hoysalas who had

similar aspirations. He established his capital at Devagiri (later renamed Daulatabad), hence his dynasty is known as the Yadavas of Devagiri.

The Yadava kingdom reached its zenith under Simhana (1210-1246), who made it the supreme power in the Deccan. The last famous ruler of this dynasty was Rama Chandra Deva, who was confronted with the invasions of Alauddin Khalji.

### The Kakatiyas

The Kakatiyas were an old family of Telengana who had served as feudatories of the Western Chalukyas in the early eleventh century. Their earliest known chief, Beta I, availed of the confusion caused by the invasion of Rajendra Chola and carved out a small kingdom in the Nalgonda district



*Thousand – pillared temple. Andhra Pradesh, Kakatiya period*



(Hyderabad). After the death of the Western Chalukya king, Vikramaditya VI, the Kakatiya rulers began to expand their power by overwhelming the latter's feudatories.

Among the prominent rulers of this dynasty was Ganapati, who ruled for more than sixty years and brought the entire Telugu-speaking area under his sway. He erected an efficient administrative machinery and took steps to improve trade and agriculture. He completed the construction of the city of Warangal and shifted his capital there.

He was succeeded by his daughter Rudramadevi, who assumed the name of Rudradeva Maharaja, and ruled for almost thirty-five years (1261-1295). She fought the king of Orissa and the Yadavas who threatened her kingdom. Like her father, she was a patron of the Pasupata Saiva monasteries established by her father's preceptor, Vivesvara Sambhu.

She was succeeded by her grandson, Pratap Rudra (1295-1323), who was to be the last king of this dynasty. Pratap Rudra's reign was characterised by repeated invasions from the north; eight according to the Vilasa grant of Prolaya Nayaka, five or six according to Muslim chroniclers.

### **Dynasties of South India**

#### **The Chola Empire**

The Cholas were rulers of great antiquity, and are mentioned in the rock edicts of Emperor Ashoka. Their power revived in the mid-ninth century under Vijayalaya whose links with the earlier

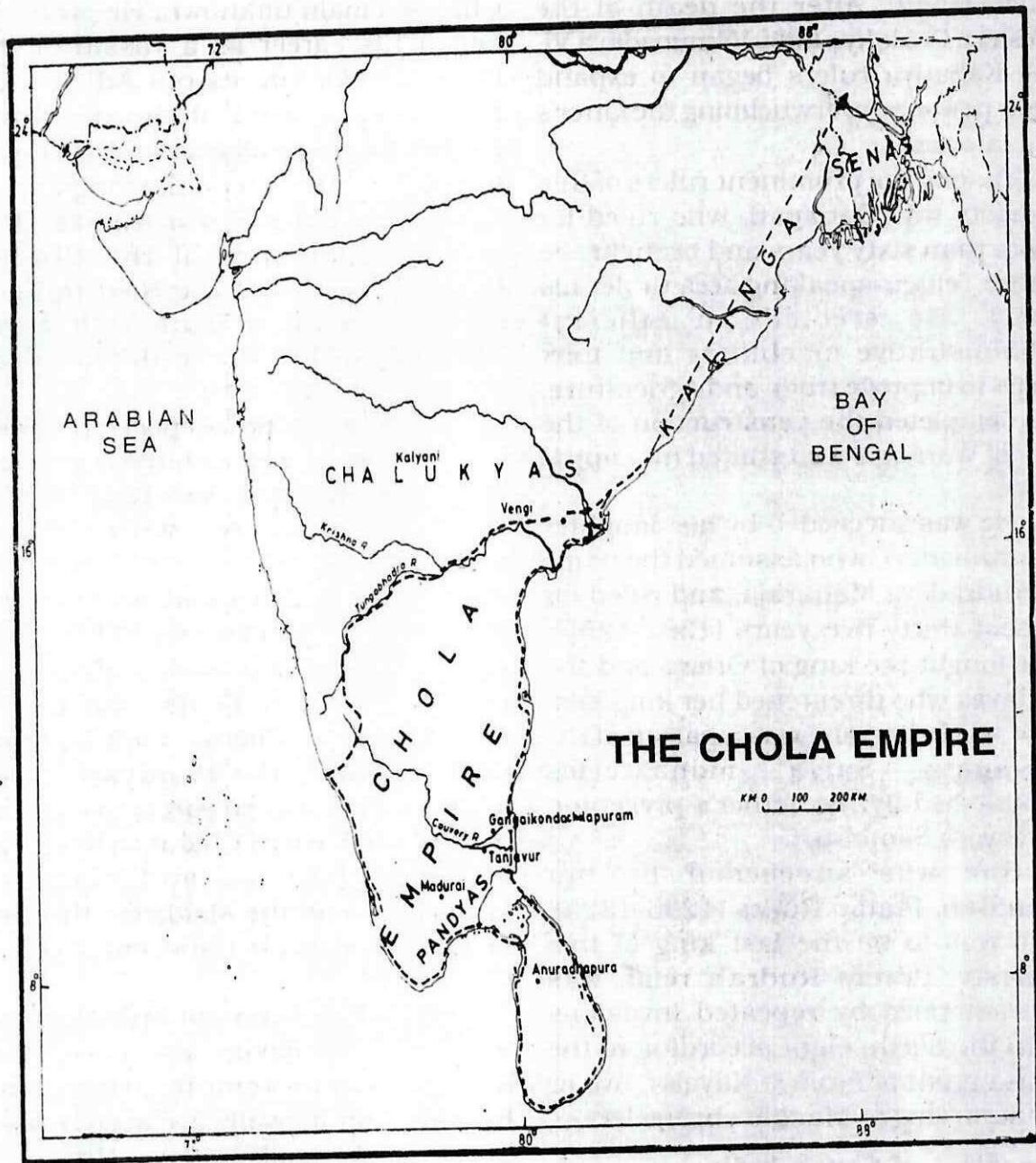
Cholas remain unknown. He probably began his career as a vassal of the Pallavas. His successors Aditya and Parantaka availed of the declining fortunes of the Pallavas and Pandyas to considerably extend the kingdom to cover large parts of south India. The growing eminence of the Cholas however, provoked the Rashtrakuta king, Krishna II, to battle with them. They were decisively defeated at Takkolam in A.D. 949.

The most glorious epoch in Chola history commenced with the accession of Rajaraja the Great (985-1014), which has been compared with that of Samudragupta in its political significance. Within just about a decade, Rajaraja transformed a small kingdom into an empire and made himself the paramount ruler of the south. He subjugated the Cheras, took Madura and captured the Pandyan king, annexed the northern part of Sri Lanka, overran the Eastern Chalukya kingdom of Vengi, Kalinga, and also the Laccadives and the Maldives, the last being a testimony to the strength of the Chola navy.

He built the beautiful Brihadesvara temple at Thanjavur, also called the Rajarajeswara temple after him. Engraved on its walls are accounts of his varied accomplishments. Himself a devotee of Siva, Rajaraja also had temples built for Vishnu. Besides, he assisted the king of Java in constructing and endowing a Buddhist vihara.

Rajaraja was succeeded by his son, Rajendra I (1014-44), under whom Chola power reached its pinnacle. The





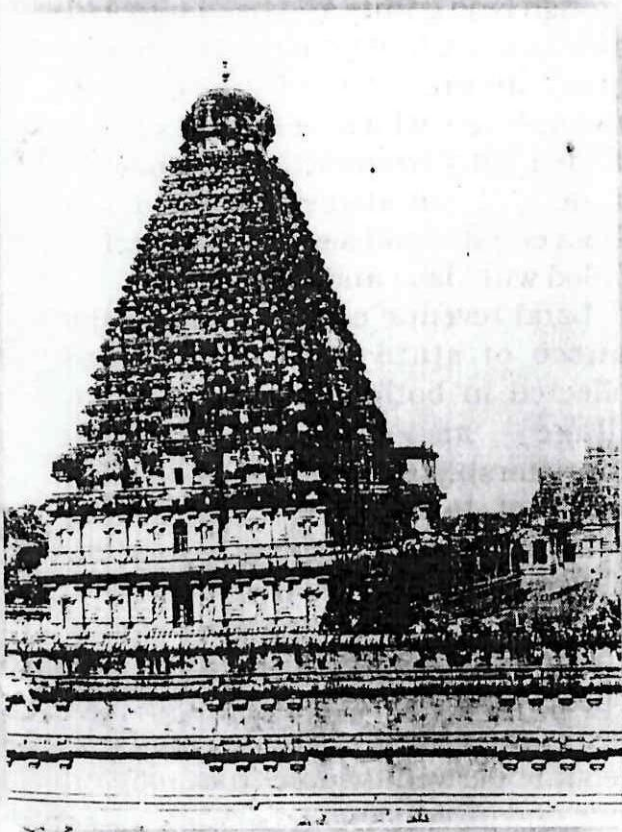
Present External Boundary of India - - - -

Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.





*Rajarajeswara Temple, Tamil Nadu*

Tiruvallangadu copper plate inscription and the Tirumalai rock inscription provide details of his conquests and his skills as a commander. Soon after ascending the throne, he annexed the whole of Sri Lanka and reasserted Chola sovereignty over the Kerala and Pandyan country. The war with the Western Chalukyas was resumed, but despite Chola claims of success, the Tungabhadra remained the northern limit of their empire.

Rajendra I made a triumphant march towards the north as far as the

Ganga and the kingdom of the Pala king, Mahipala. The ostensible purpose of this campaign was to bring the holy waters of the Ganges to his kingdom, and it was after this daring campaign that he assumed the title of Gangaikonda.

Rajendra I also utilised his powerful fleet to notch up victories across the Bay of Bengal. The king of Cambodia, threatened by the Shailendra kings of Malaya and Sumatra, had sought the help of Rajendra Chola. The latter was lured by the prospect of commanding the maritime trade between east and west Asia, hitherto controlled by Malaya and Sumatra. Rajendra Chola is said to have conquered Sumatra and stimulated commerce between the Malaya Peninsula and south India. It is possible that his project to bring the Ganga waters may have been influenced by the desire to dominate Orissa and Bengal and thereby control the entire east coast of India.

Rajendra Chola was a generous benefactor of temples and colleges. He founded a new capital, Gangaikonda-Cholapuram, which was adorned by a beautiful temple and palace. A huge artificial tank was excavated in the vicinity of this city and was fed by water drawn from nearby rivers. One of his daughters was married to the Eastern Chalukya king, and her son, Kulottunga, became the first Chola-Chalukyan monarch.

Rajendra I was succeeded by his eldest son, Rajadhiraja (1044-54) and he, by his brother, Rajendra II. Both were capable generals.



The last important Chola ruler was Kulottunga I (1070-1122). He united the kingdoms of the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and the Cholas. His accession practically synchronised with the loss of Sri Lanka. He also had to deal with the rebellions of the Pandyas and Cheras. He lost Vengi and faced a Hoysala invasion, which resulted in the loss of the Gangavadi province. Thus, at the end of his reign, the Chola kingdom was confined to a much smaller area.

Kulottunga is credited with introducing a number of administrative reforms in the kingdom, the most important being the land surveys in the sixteenth and forty-eighth years of his reign. By an interesting coincidence, the first survey took place in the same year as the Domesday survey in England.

Though a devout Saivite, Kulottunga made grants to the Buddhist shrines at Negapattam. After him, Chola power gradually declined and its place was finally taken by the Hoysalas of Dwaraśamudra and the Pandyas of Madurai. Memory of the Cholas survived in the name of their country, Chola-mandal (anglicised into Coromandel).

#### **Chola Administration**

The emperor was the pivot of the Chola administrative machinery, and the royal princes actively engaged in civil and military duties. The king was assisted by a ministerial council and administrative staff, and enhanced the efficiency of the administration with regular royal tours.

State officers were often paid through land grants and bestowed with titles as a mark of honour. The empire was divided into provinces (*mandalams*), which were further subdivided into *valanadus* and *nadus*. Trade and commerce thrived in the Chola empire, and several large guilds traded with Java and Sumatra.

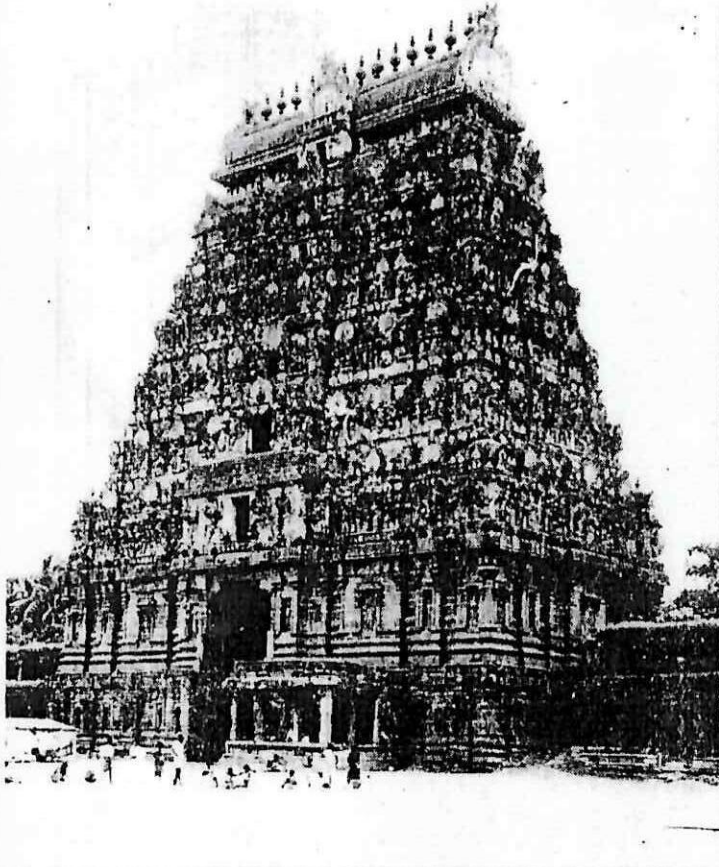
Land revenue constituted a major source of state income and was collected in both cash and kind by village assemblies. Peasant proprietorship existed alongside other forms of land tenure. Both the government and the local authorities paid great attention to irrigation, with village authorities taking special care to maintain tanks. The state share appears to have been pegged at one-third of the produce. Besides land tax, the state derived income from tolls on trade and professions.

The army comprised of cavalry, infantry and elephants. Commanders were given the ranks of *nayaka*, *senapati* or *mahadandanayaka*. The *velaikkaras* were the emperor's personal bodyguards. Costly Arabian horses were imported in large numbers, but most of them did not enjoy a full lifespan due to poor upkeep.

The Chola navy made notable gains during this period. The Cholas controlled the Coromandel and Malabar coasts, as well as the Bay of Bengal.

Besides temple construction, the Cholas undertook vast public works, excavating tanks, sinking wells, and constructing dams across the Kaveri





South Gopuram, Chidambaram Temple,  
Tamil Nadu

and other rivers, and cutting channels to transport water for irrigation purposes. The artificial lake dug by Rajendra I near his capital had embankments sixteen miles in length as well as stone sluices and channels. The Cholas also constructed grand roads to facilitate commerce and communications, as also the movement of troops. They built great cities, like Tanjore, Gangaikonda-Cholapuram, and Kanchi.

### Local Administration

An elaborate and complex system of rural administration developed in Chola times. On the basis of inscriptional evidence, it is possible to form an idea of at least three types of assemblies that functioned at the local level, the *ur*, the *sabha* or *mahasabha*, and the *nagaram*.

The *ur* was the common form of assembly in villages where all classes of people held land and were members of the assembly. The *sabha* was the assembly of brahmins in *brahmadeya* villages, where at least to begin

with, brahmins were the principal landholders. The *nagaram* was an assembly of merchants and was normally found in areas where traders and merchants were dominant. These three types of assemblies, along with others, often coexisted in the same locality and engaged in mutual consultation on matters of common interest.

Two inscriptions belonging to the early tenth century (A.D. 919 and 921), the Uttaramerur inscriptions, are regarded as a watershed in the history of Chola village assemblies. They lay





*Bodhisattva Maitreya, Chola period,  
eleventh century bronze*



*Siva Nataraj, Chola period,  
twelfth century*

down the procedure for appointing committees (*variya*m) of six to twelve members to oversee local administration. The number of committees varied from village to village; no remuneration was paid to committee members. The functions performed by the assemblies are indicative of the extent of autonomy enjoyed by the villages. The committees also supervised the village administration with the help of paid officials. The judicial committee, called the *nyayattar*, dealt with matters related to law.

The *sabha* was vested with proprietary rights over common lands, helped in the reclamation of forest and

wastelands, assisted royal officials in estimating the land revenue obligations of the village, collected revenue, and in cases of default, was empowered to sell land by auction.

The *sabha* also oversaw the maintenance of roads and irrigation works; its decisions were recorded by *madhyasthas*.

#### **Chola Art**

The Cholas were prolific builders of temples and the art style they evolved was adopted in other parts of south India as also in Sri Lanka. As a consequence of their rule, the entire Tamil country came to be studded with temples.



The distinguishing feature of Chola temples was their gigantic towers or *vimans*. The *vimana* of the Brihadesvara temple, for instance, is about fifty-seven metres high and is further crowned by a single bloc of granite more than seven metres in height. A hall, called *mandap*, with elaborately carved pillars and a flat roof, was generally located in front of the sanctum. It functioned as an audience hall for devotees and was also the place where ceremonial dances were performed. Sometimes a passage, containing images of gods, was added around the sanctum for devotees to perambulate. The entire structure was enclosed in a courtyard surrounded by high walls with lofty gates called *gopurams*.

Some of the Chola temples also exhibited portrait images of the kings and their chief queens. Chola sculpture was characterised by a harmonious blend of energy, grace and dignity, as is evident in the famous Nataraj or Dancing Siva image at Chidambaram. Chola bronzes are justly renowned as the epitome of Chola art. The most famous Chola paintings are those adorning the *pradakshina* passage of the Brihadesvara temple.

#### Hoysalas

The history of the Hoysalas properly begins with Nrupakama (1022-1047) who together with his son occupied the Hasan and Kadur districts and parts of Nagamangala *taluk* in Mysore. This was the area between the Western Chalukya and Chola empires. Subsequently, the Hoysala kingdom became almost co-terminous with the

former Mysore state, though the Hoysalas dug deep into Chola land and for a time even reached south of the Kaveri. They engaged in numerous contests with the Yadavas and Pandyas. Among the outstanding rulers of this dynasty were Vishnuvardhan, Ballala II and Ballala III.

Ballala III had to face the armies of the Delhi Sultanate. Though defeated in 1310, he sustained a fierce resistance against the Khalji and Tughlaq armies for over three decades. He also battled the Sultan of Madurai.

The Hoysalas made Dwarasamudra their capital. Located near it was Belur, which also served as a royal residence and is famous for the magnificent Hoysala monuments.

The Hoysalas were among the greatest builders of their times and developed the art traditions of the Chalukyas. The Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid has been described as the "highest achievement" of the Chalukya-Hoysala style of architecture, characterised by its low pyramidal *shikhar* and profusely carved plinth. This richly sculpted temple was left incomplete, probably due to the invasions from the north that took place around this time.

#### The Later Pandyas

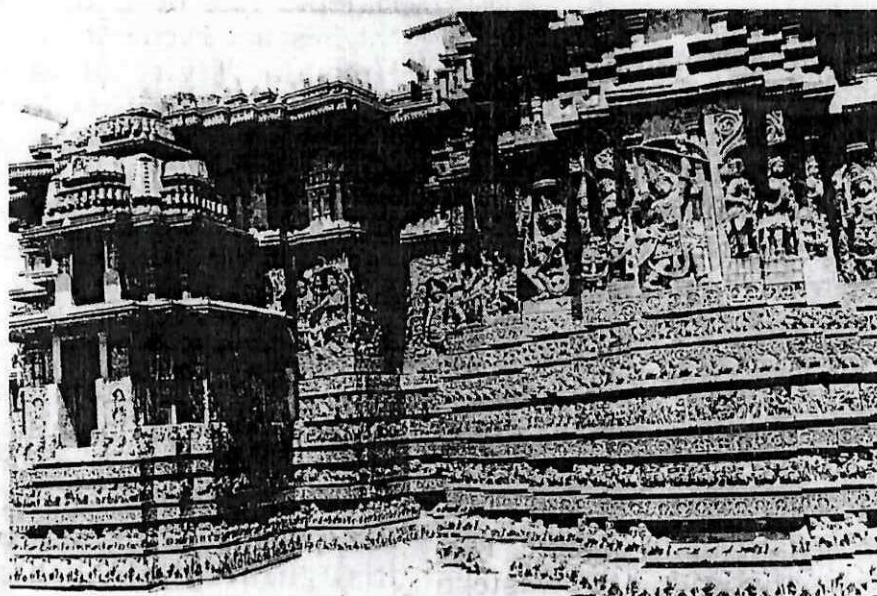
Despite being defeated by a number of Chola kings, the Pandyas managed to begin a process of recovery under Jatavarman Kulasekhara. The second Pandya empire appears to have been inaugurated by his brother Maravarman Sundara Pandya.

Among the greatest rulers of this dynasty was Jatavarman Sundara





*Halebid, Hoysaleswara temple*



*Halebid, Hoysaleswara temple, wall of southern vimana*



Pandya I (1251-1268). He vanquished the Cheras, Hoysalas and Cholas, besides conquering northern Sri Lanka. He also endowed the temples of Srirangam and Chidambaram, providing them with golden roofs. Other important rulers include Jatavarman Vira Pandya (1253-1275) and Maravarman Kulasekhara. During the latter's reign, the Pandyas also subjugated Sri Lanka.

Marco Polo, who visited the Pandyan kingdom around A.D. 1293, has left a vivid account of the splendour of the kingdom. He wrote, "The great province of Ma'bar ... is best of all the Indies.... It is at this city that all the ships touch that come from the west, as from Hormuz and from Kis (an island in the Persian Gulf) and from Aden, and all Arabia, laden with horses and with other things for sale... There is a great business done in this city... The king possesses vast treasures and wears upon his person great store of rich jewels. He maintains a great state and

administers his kingdom with great equity, and extends great favour to merchants and foreigners so that they are very glad to visit his city."

A succession dispute between two Pandyan princes, Sundara and Vira Pandya, provided the Khalji forces an opportunity to invade the kingdom in 1310.

### Overview

While surveying the apparently fractured polity during these centuries, it should be borne in mind that India is virtually as large as Europe, excluding Russia. Viewed thus, the number of kingdoms was not disproportionate to its size, and certainly not indicative of a disintegrating political order. Rather, as mentioned earlier, new areas and groups being incorporated into the system were also contributing to the polity. But despite the political variety, India remained a cultural entity. Religious festivals, popular fairs, pilgrimages, spiritual and literary texts all reinforced its cohesiveness.

## Exercises

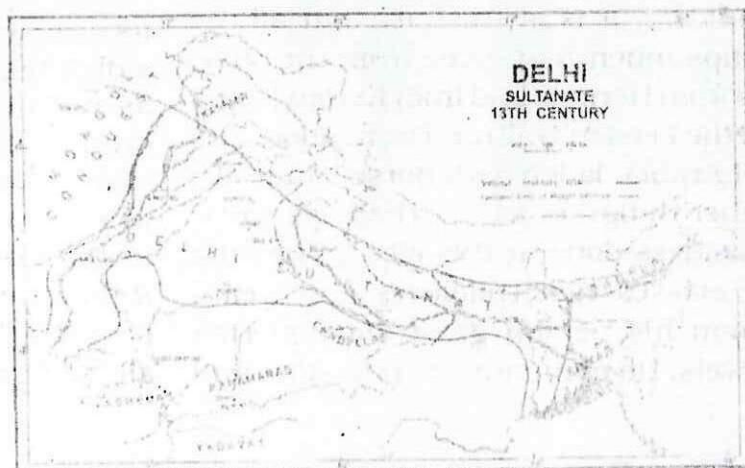
1. Write short notes on:
  - a) Vikramaditya VI
  - b) Bhillama
  - c) Rudramadevi
  - d) Chola art
  - e) Chola rural administration
2. Describe the achievements of Rajaraja Chola.
3. Match the following
 

|                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Taila II</li> <li>b) Simhana</li> <li>c) Pratap Rudra</li> <li>d) Rajendra I</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>belonged to the Kakatiya dynasty</li> <li>was a great Chola emperor</li> <li>was the founder of the Chalukya house of Kalyani</li> <li>was an important ruler of the Yadava kingdom</li> </ol> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

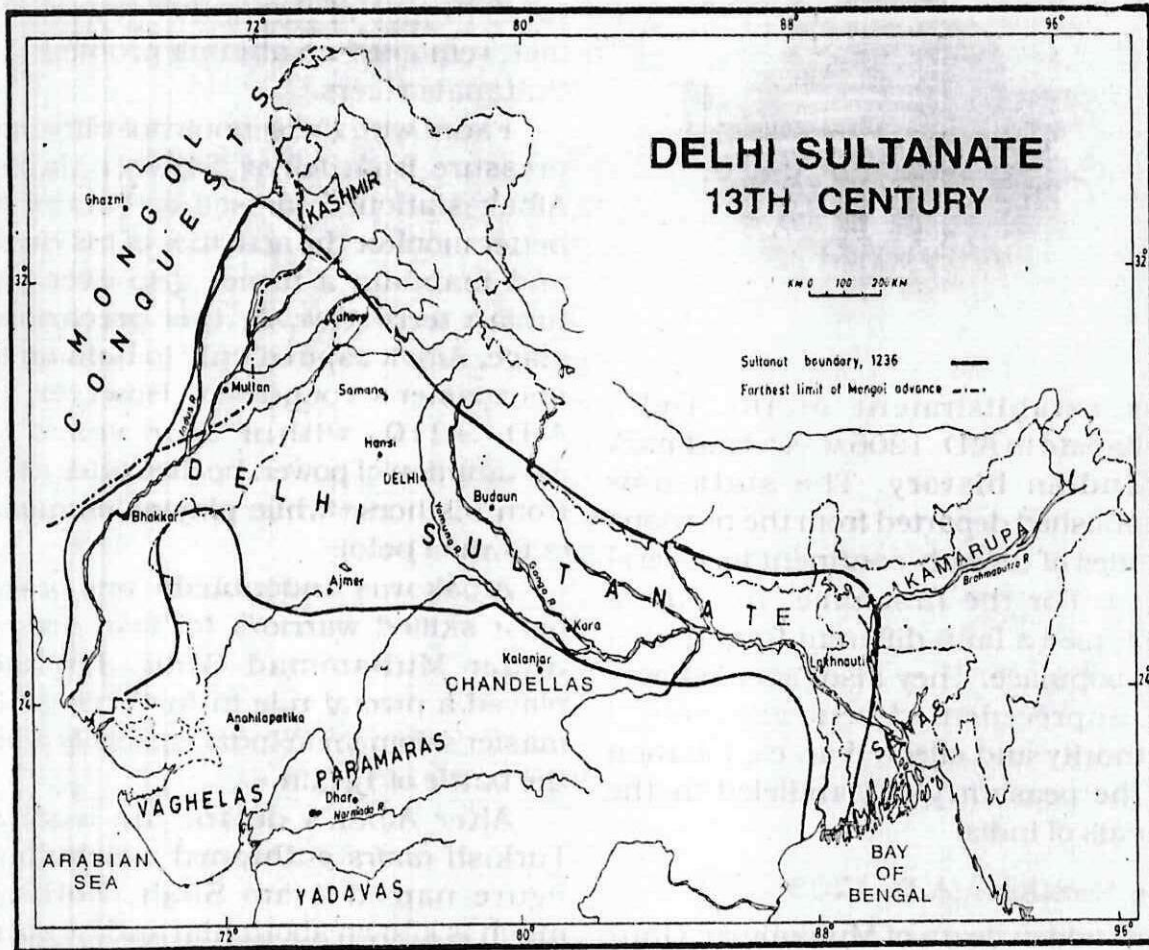


# 7 CHAPTER

## FOUNDING OF THE DELHI SULTANATE





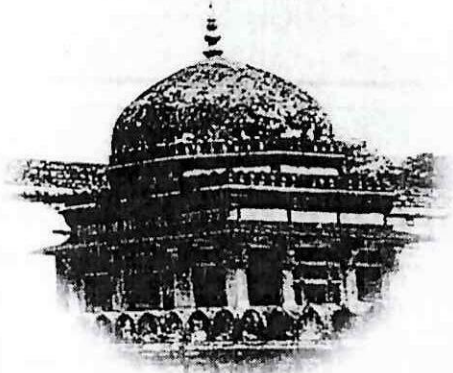


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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.





**THE** establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in A.D. 1206 was a landmark in Indian history. The state now established departed from the previous polities of the sub-continent in several ways. For the first time, the rulers professed a faith different from that of the populace. They also presided over an unprecedented centralisation of authority and effected an exploitation of the peasantry unparalleled in the annals of India.

#### The Mamluks (A.D. 1206 - 1290)

The sudden death of Muhammad Ghur and his failure to specify succession procedures pitted his three leading slaves, Tajuddin Yalduz, Nasiruddin Qubacha and Qutbuddin Aibak against each other. The Ghurid possessions at this time included Multan, Uchch, Nahrwala, Purshor, Sialkot, Lahore, Tabarhind, Tarain, Ajmer, Hansi, Sursuti, Kuhram, Meerut, Koil, Delhi, Badaun, Gwalior, Bhera, Banaras, Kanauj, Kalinjar,

Awadh, Malwa, Bihar and Lakhnauti.

In reality, many of these areas were only nominally under Ghurid control, while others had openly proclaimed freedom from Turkish yoke. The recalcitrance of the native powers, in fact, remained an abiding problem for Sultanate rulers.

Faced with indigenous hostility and pressure from fellow Turkish slaves, Aibak stationed himself at Lahore to better monitor the activities of his rivals and maintain a firmer grip over the Indian territories. At this precarious stage, Aibak aspired only to hold on to his master's conquests. However, in A.D. 1210, within four years of assumption of power, he died after a fall from his horse while playing *chaugan* (a form of polo).

Aibak was undoubtedly one of the most skilled warriors to have served under Muhammad Ghur. He had played a pivotal role in furthering his master's domain in India, specially after the battle of Tarain.

After Aibak's death, the leading Turkish *amirs* enthroned a nebulous figure named Aram Shah. Nothing much is known about him and he soon made way for Aibak's son-in-law, Shamsuddin Iltutmish.

#### The Shamsi Dynasties

Iltutmish, like Aibak, found himself in a political quagmire. Not only had he to deal with the Turkish slave-officers who considered themselves his equals, he also had to contend with three formidable potentates – Yalduz in Ghazni, Qubacha in Multan and Ali



Mardan in Lakhnauti. To add to his woes, the perennially rebellious native chiefs were stirring afresh. Jalor and Ranthambor had become independent, while Ajmer, Gwalior and the Doab had also shed the Turkish mantle.

Iltutmish's reign of twenty-six years has been divided by scholars into three broad phases – the first from A.D. 1210-1220 when he was preoccupied with disposing off rival contenders to his authority; the second from A.D. 1221-1227 during which he dealt with the Mongol menace; and the third from A.D. 1228-1236 when he devoted himself to consolidating his dynasty.

Soon after Iltutmish's accession, Yalduz moved out of Ghazni, occupied Lahore and established his authority in Punjab up to Thanesar. Iltutmish was left with no option but to join battle with him; Yalduz was defeated in the encounter and killed shortly thereafter.

But fresh troubles arose with the unexpected arrival of the Khwarizmi prince, Jalaluddin Mangbari, in search of shelter from the Mongols. The Mongols at this time were a dreaded force under Chengiz Khan, who prided in describing himself as the "scourge of God." Though the Delhi Sultanate thence onward became vulnerable to Mongol raids, India was fortunate to escape the full fury of the devastation they wrought in China, Central Asia, Russia and Persia.

Punjab and the Upper Sind Sagar Doab, however, now became a battleground between the Mongols, Qubacha and Mangbari. Anxious to

protect his kingdom, Iltutmish remained neutral in the conflict and as long as Chengiz Khan was alive (till 1227), did not venture to extend his authority in the cis-Indus region. In 1224, much to his relief, Mangbari departed from India, leaving him free to focus on other troublesome parts of his kingdom.

Bengal was the first to demand his attention, where Husamuddin Iwaz Khalji had begun to function as a *de facto* independent ruler. Iltutmish marched to the east and occupied all the districts of Bihar south of the Ganges. Iwaz submitted, recognised the suzerainty of Delhi and agreed to pay a huge indemnity. However, soon after Iltutmish's withdrawal, he again assumed sovereign status, obliging the Sultan to dispatch a force to divest him of his position. He was killed in the ensuing encounter with the Delhi armies. Iltutmish now established control over Lakhnauti and appointed his son in-charge of its affairs.

In 1226, Iltutmish captured the great fort of Ranthambor and in the following year, that of Mandisor in the Sivalik region. He followed this by wresting Jalor from the Chauhans and recovering Bayana and Thangir. In addition, Ajmer, along with Sambhar and Nagaur in Jodhpur were re-occupied, though not without resistance.

Iltutmish also established his authority over Bhatinda (then called Tabarhind), Sursuti and Lahore. In 1228, he planned a simultaneous attack on Uchch and Multan, which



ended in Qubacha's defeat. Qubacha chose death by drowning himself in the Indus rather than surrender. Iltutmish thereafter strengthened his hold on Sind and the Punjab.

In 1231, Iltutmish marched to Gwalior which, like several other areas in northern India occupied by Muhammad Ghur, had subsequently been lost. The Gwalior fort held out for eleven months, but was finally taken in 1232 when the Parihara ruler decamped from the citadel. Iltutmish himself led an attack on Nagada, the capital of the Guhilots, but was repulsed. He also suffered a setback in his encounter with the Chalukyas of Gujarat.

In 1234-35, Iltutmish marched against Malwa, plundered Bhilsa and Ujjain, where he destroyed the temple of Mahakala Deva. In the Doab, he reconquered Badaun, Kanauj, Banaras, Kāteher, Bahraich and Awadh. He died in 1236 of an illness contracted during a campaign to the north-west.

### Achievements

Historians credit Iltutmish with organising the *iqta* system, the army, and the currency, the three vital organs of Sultanate administration.

To effect greater control over the conquered areas, Iltutmish granted *iqtas* (land assignments in lieu of cash salaries) to his Turkish officers on a significant scale. In an astute move to fortify his own position, he settled two thousand Turkish soldiers in the Doab region. This served the added purpose of harnessing the economic potential of the area for the benefit of his state.

Iltutmish also attempted to establish a centrally recruited army with a view to increasing the military muscle of the Sultan. He contributed to the currency system of the Sultanate by introducing the silver *tanka* and the copper *jital*, the two basic coins in circulation in the period.

Iltutmish was a pious Muslim who demonstrated deep respect for the leading Sūfī saints of his time. He also patronised the *ulema* and held frequent discussions on religious matters at his court. He received a robe of honour and a patent of investiture from the Caliph of Baghdad, whose name he inscribed on his coins.

He was a patron of the arts and completed the construction of the Qutb Minar.

### Raziya and Other Successors

Iltutmish is said to have nominated his daughter, Raziya, as his heir, but this was disregarded by his nobles who raised his son, Ruknuddin Firuz Shah, to the throne. Ruknuddin's brief and inglorious reign was dominated by his mother, Shah Turkan originally a Turkish handmaiden. Tired of her undue influence, the Turkish amirs deposed Ruknuddin and made way for Raziya.

Despite her obvious qualities, Raziya did not fare significantly better, primarily because her attempts to create a counter-nobility of non-Turks invited the wrath of the Turkish *amirs*. They were particularly incensed over her decision to appoint the Abyssinian, Malik Jamaluddin Yaqut, as the *amir*-



*i-akhur* (master of the horse); the recruitment of other non-Turks to important posts further inflamed matters.

The Turkish officers revolted under the leadership of Ikhtiyaruddin Aitigin (the *amir-i-hajib*, lord chamberlain) and Malik Altunia (the governor of Bhatinda), arrested Raziya and placed Bahram Shah, Iltutmish's third son, on the throne. But their plans went awry when the new Sultan, in order to improve his own position, had Aitigin murdered. Raziya seized the opportunity to marry Altunia, who, dissatisfied with the turn of events, perceived this as a means to further his own ambitions. Together, they marched to Delhi and tried to regain the throne, but failed. While retreating, they fell into the hands of bandits and were killed. According to another account, however, Raziya was defeated in battle and put to death along with her husband.

The medieval chronicler Minhaj us Siraj described her as "a great sovereign... endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for kings." On ascending the throne, she gave up her female attire and appeared in public with a cloak (*qaba*) and hat (*kulah*). She rode on the back of an elephant and conducted state affairs as any other ruler.

During Raziya's brief but eventful reign of three and a half years two expeditions were undertaken. The first against Ranthambor which had been recaptured by the Chauhans after the death of Iltutmish, and the second against Gwalior, which had also broken free. Both ended in failure.

In 1242, after a two-year reign, Bahram Shah was imprisoned and put to death by the Turkish *amirs*. In his stead, they placed Masud Shah, son of Ruknuddin Firuz Shah, on the throne of Delhi. Four years later, in 1246, he was also thrown into prison and supplanted by Nasiruddin Mahmud, grandson of Iltutmish.

In the decade since Iltutmish's death, four princes of his dynasty had been enthroned, deposed and killed by his Turkish nobles. The new Sultan therefore wisely regarded discretion the better part of valour, and surrendered completely to his *amirs*. A contemporary writer vividly portrays Nasiruddin's plight: "He expressed no opinion without their prior permission; he did not move his hands or feet except at their order. He would neither drink water nor go to sleep except with their knowledge."

### Ghiyasuddin Balban

Ghiyasuddin Balban, a Turkish slave of Iltutmish, had for several years been the power behind Nasiruddin Mahmud. Eventually, according to the accounts of Ibn Battuta and Isami, he poisoned his master and ascended the throne. Conscious of the threat posed by fellow Turkish *amirs* and anxious to protect himself from a similar fate, he liquidated as many members of the slave aristocracy as possible.

### Consolidation

Balban's reign has been viewed as a period of consolidation, rather than expansion. In view of the almost



complete upheaval in northern India; even consolidation was no small achievement. The Doab and Awadh were in perpetual rebellion, and revenue could not be realised from Kateher. Rebellious Rajput chiefs kept sniping at the Sultanate in Badaun, Amroha, Patiali, Kampili, in addition to their other strongholds. The area around the capital was wholly unsafe, while conditions in the distant provinces were infinitely worse. Indeed, it is fitting to note here the inability of any Turkish ruler, from Aibak to Kaiqubad (died 1290), to add to the territories of the Sultanate. All Mamluks, without exception, expended their energies in just re-conquering what Muhammad Ghur had won.

Balban first ventured to assert his authority in upper India where the Meos (inhabitants of the region of Mewat corresponding roughly to north-eastern Rajasthan and said to be Yaduvanshi Rajputs) had become so emboldened as to routinely plunder the capital city. Balban spent a whole year suppressing them. He killed as many as possible and to maintain a strict vigil over the rest, built a fort at Gopalgir as well as several *thanas* (military posts), manned by Afghans.

Balban then attempted to subdue the Doab which was seething with rebellion. This was followed by efforts to open the road to Awadh to merchants and caravans, a project that occupied him for nearly six months. At Kampili, Patiali, Bhojpur, and Jalali, he built strong forts and entrusted them to Afghans. The repeated recourse to

Afghan militia to intimidate the local populace was a pointer to the heavy-handed nature of the polity under the Mamluks.

Kateher was another chronically disturbed area. The medieval historian, Ziauddin Barani states that it had become so disorderly that Balban ordered a general massacre of its male population. While this could be an exaggeration, it is indisputable that the Sultan was ruthless in his dealings with the inhabitants of the area. According to Barani, "corpses were piled up before every village, and the stench of the decomposing corpses reached the bank of the Ganges... From that time to the end of Jalaluddin's (Khalji's) reign, no rebel raised his head in Kateher." Balban subsequently suppressed the rebels in the Jud hills (Salt Range).

In 1279, encouraged by the Mongol threats and the old age of the Sultan, the governor of Bengal, Tughril Khan, revolted, assumed the title of Sultan, and had the *khutba* read in his name. Three successive contingents fielded against him failed, forcing the Sultan to assume direct command of the operations. Finally, Tughril was captured, put to death, and terrible punishments inflicted on his followers.

### Theory of Kingship

Notwithstanding his political frailty, Balban was the first Sultan of Delhi to articulate a comprehensive theory of kingship. His critics allege that in ideologically elevating himself and claiming divine right to rule, Balban hoped to shed the stigma of being a regicide.



Balban's theory of kingship was heavily influenced by Sassanid Persia where kingship was widely accepted as supernatural in character. Balban repeatedly asserted that the king was the shadow of God (*zilillah*) and his vice-regent on earth (*niyabat-i-Khudai*). He owed his powers and position to God, rather than to his nobles or subjects. Consequently, he was answerable to the Almighty alone and his actions were immune from public scrutiny and criticism.

To reinforce his exalted status, Balban maintained a grim public demeanour, never openly displaying any emotions or weakness. He never laughed in the *darbar*, observed the most rigid formalities, and prohibited drinking among his courtiers. He kept a distance from the masses and even refused to talk to common people. He constantly emphasised the distinction between the high and low born. "When I happen to look at a low-born person," he once remarked, "every artery and vein in my body begins to agitate with fury." Balban laid great stress on genealogy, claiming descent from the mythical hero, Afrasiyab. He never appeared in court without his full regalia and royal paraphernalia. Court ceremonies were organised on the Sassanid model, and the Sultan revived the practices of *sijda* (prostration) and *paibos* (kissing the feet of the monarch).

### Evaluation

Some scholars have argued that there was little to distinguish Balban's reign except its brutality towards the hapless

rebels of Mewat and the Doab, the extermination of the Turkish slave aristocracy, and contempt for the low born converts to Islam. For all the depiction of Balban as a tough monarch, they say, he never dared fight a Rajput raja.

They brush aside the argument that Balban had to conserve his energies for the contest with the Mongols. They point out that the great Mongol warrior, Halaku, had died a year before Balban's accession. Halaku's successors, the Il-Khan Mongols, held a kingdom of scarce resources and were hardly a force to reckon with, though they did manage to kill Balban's heir-apparent, Prince Muhammad.

Balban appears to have been a poor military leader. It took his forces more than three years to suppress Tughril, the rebel governor of Bengal. The dismal record of Balban's army has led scholars to conclude that it was a mere showpiece with its Sistani and Turkish soldiers, and was extraordinarily inefficient in dealing with internal and external threats.

Even in the non-military field, Balban's accomplishments were modest. Despite his exaggerated praise of Balban, the medieval chronicler Minhaj us Siraj is unable to present him as a patron of culture.

### End of Mamluk Rule

Balban died in 1286 after nominating Kaikhusrau, son of the deceased Prince Muhammad, as his successor. But his nobles placed another grandson, Kaiqubad, on the throne. He was soon



replaced by his son, Kaimurs, who in turn, remained on the throne for a little over three months. In all, Balban's dynasty did not survive more than three years after his death.

#### Nobility Under the Mamluks

The medieval historian Minhaj us Siraj has presented a biographical sketch of twenty-five slaves of Iltutmish, whom he calls Shamsi slaves after the name of the ruler, Shamsuddin Iltutmish. The slaves were mostly Turks, and a majority of them rose to high office in the reigns of Iltutmish and his successors. The list is not exhaustive, for there are references to other slaves of Iltutmish not mentioned by Minhaj.

Despite the dominance of the Turkish slaves, the polity included other foreign groups such as free Turkish nobles, Khaljis, Ghurids and Tajiks. From the time of Balban, Mongols and other slave groups, both African (Habashis, Abyssinians) and Indian, also participated in governance.

Most of the Shamsi slaves had been purchased from slave traders. Iltutmish is reported to have sent merchants to Samarqand and Bukhara to buy Turkish slaves on his behalf. Commenting on the Turkish devotion to Islam, the chronicler Fakhr-i-Mudabbir perceptively observed that all infidels converted to Islam looked back "with longing at home, mother, father, and kindred: for a time they are bound to adopt Islam, but in most cases they apostatise and relapse into paganism. The exception is the Turkish race, who, when they are brought over to Islam, fix their hearts in Islam so firmly that

they no longer remember home or region or kinsfolk..."

The term Chihilganis has often been used in connection with Iltutmish's slaves. There is dispute over its exact meaning. Some historians are of the view that it refers to a group of forty slaves of Iltutmish. Others contend that it denotes a group of commanders within the Shamsi slaves, each of whom commanded a corps of forty slaves.

The Turkish slaves supported Raziya against her brother Ruknuddin Firuz Shah, who depended on Tajik bureaucrats (non-Turkish people were called Tajiks in Iran and Transoxiana). But Raziya's attempt to create a power structure independent of the Turks led to her ouster. The Turkish *amirs* took further steps to fortify their position in the ensuing reigns of Bahram Shah and Masud Shah, both of whom tried to curtail their activities.

A new dimension to the power struggle manifested itself in the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud, with the rise of an Indian Muslim clique headed by Imaduddin Raihan, briefly appointed minister by the Sultan. This group even managed to secure Balban's temporary banishment from the court. However, the racially arrogant Turks could not countenance this, and hit back. Raihan and his group were quickly shunted out.

Some modern historians have accused Balban of weakening Turkish power in India by eliminating several members of the slave aristocracy. Others point out that his objective in bringing down the Shamsi nobles was to promote his own slaves. Slave status



and ancestry remained qualifications for high office under Balban, and he also recruited Indians of high rank. He brought back to Delhi the two sons of the raja of the Salt Range, after they had embraced Islam.

Tajiks formed part of Balban's nobility, as did Muslims arriving from countries occupied by the Mongols. The latter category reportedly included Jalaluddin Khalji, the future founder of the Khalji dynasty.

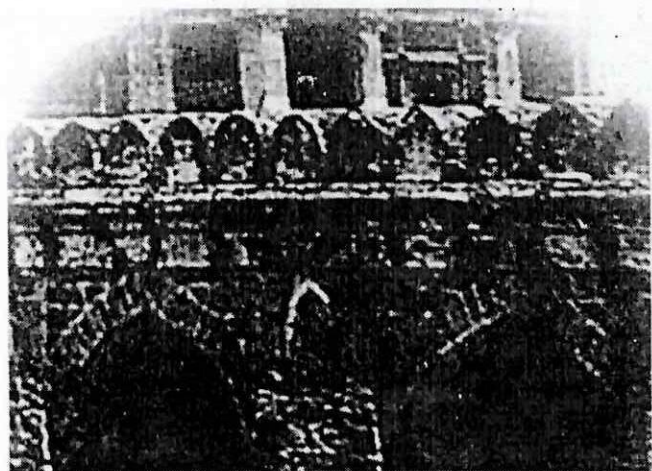
### Exercises

1. What were the problems Iltutmish confronted as Sultan of Delhi? What were his principal achievements?
2. Briefly describe Balban's campaigns against the Meos and Kateher.
3. How would you evaluate Balban as a Sultan?
4. Give a brief description of the nobility under the Mamluks.
5. Write short notes on:
  - a) Aibak
  - b) Balban's theory of kingship

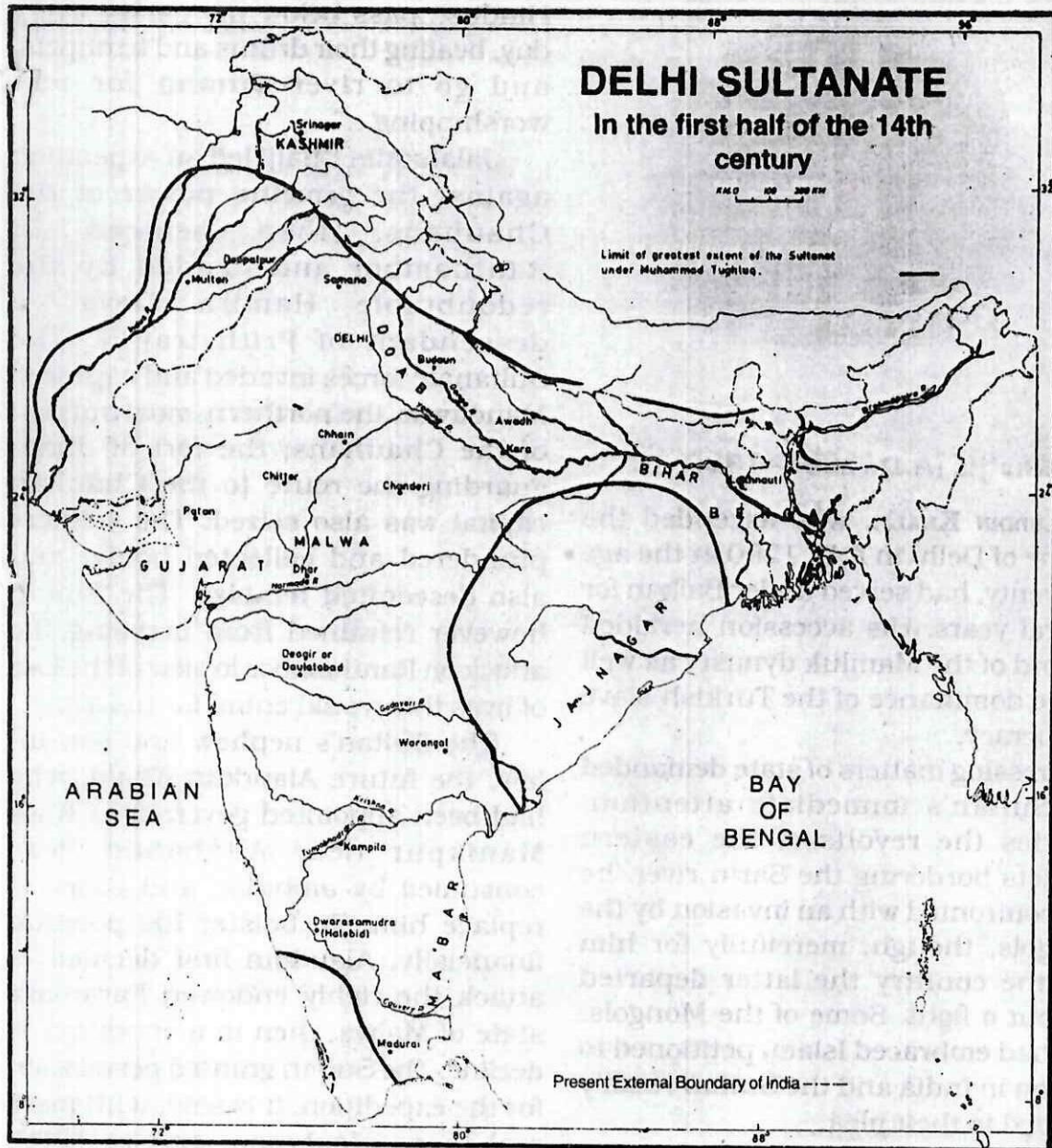


# 8 CHAPTER

## THE DELHI SULTANATE-II





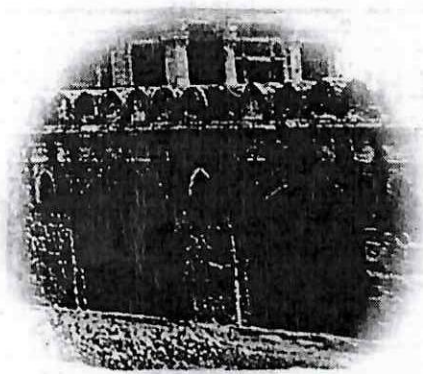


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### The Khaljis (A.D. 1290–1320)

**JALALUDDIN KHALJI**, who ascended the throne of Delhi in A.D. 1290 at the age of seventy, had served under Balban for several years. His accession heralded the end of the Mamluk dynasty as well as the dominance of the Turkish slave aristocracy.

Pressing matters of state demanded the Sultan's immediate attention. Besides the revolts of the eastern districts bordering the Sarju river, he was confronted with an invasion by the Mongols, though, mercifully for him and the country the latter departed without a fight. Some of the Mongols, who had embraced Islam, petitioned to stay on in India and the Sultan readily acceded to their plea.

Jalaluddin was a pious Muslim with the desire to be recognised as the *Mujahid fi sabilillah* (fighter in the path of God). He regretted his inability to enforce the full gamut of Islamic laws and regulations in the country. Barani records his lament to his relative, Malik

Ahmad Chap: "We cannot compare ourselves with Sultan Mahmud... the Hindus... pass below my palace every day, beating their drums and trumpets, and go to river Jumna for idol worshipping..."

Jalaluddin Khalji led an expedition against the growing power of the Chauhans, then centred at Ranthambor and headed by the redoubtable Hamira Deva, a descendant of Prithviraj II. The Sultanate forces invaded and captured Mandawar, the northernmost outpost of the Chauhans; the fort of Jhain guarding the route to the Chauhan capital was also seized. The soldiers plundered and collected booty, and also desecrated temples. The Sultan however refrained from pressing the attack on Ranthambor in view of the loss of lives this would entail for his army.

The Sultan's nephew and son-in-law, the future Alauddin Khalji, who had been appointed governor of Kara Manikpur near Allahabad, was consumed by ambition and eager to replace him. To bolster his position financially, Alauddin first decided to attack the richly endowed Paramara state of Malwa, then in a condition of decline. The Sultan granted permission for the expedition, it is said, with more zeal than calculation, and in 1292, Alauddin led a raiding party via Chanderi to Bhilsa. He returned with immense treasures and in the evocative words of a modern historian, "the inevitable idol to be trampled under the zealot's feet."



In 1295, Alauddin led a surprise raid on Devagiri, the Yadava capital then under Rama Chandra Deva, with a view to further enriching himself. This was the first instance that a Turkish army had intruded into southern India, then dominated by four powerful dynasties. Besides the Yadavas of Devagiri, these included the Kakatiyas of Telengana, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra and the Pandyas of Madura.

The Yadava ruler was taken unawares. The greater part of his army was with his son, who was away on a pilgrimage. After an unequal fight, Rama Chandra Deva surrendered and agreed to pay a heavy indemnity. The booty in the form of gold, silver, pearls, precious stones, slaves, elephants and horses was such that, according to contemporary observers, no Sultan of Delhi had ever possessed anything like it. Soon thereafter, in 1296, Alauddin murdered his uncle and seized the throne.

#### **Alauddin Khalji**

At the time of Alauddin Khalji's accession, despite almost ninety years of rule, the Turkish slave aristocracy had been only partially successful in establishing its hold on India. Punjab, beyond Lahore was frequently jolted by the revolts of the Khokars. The Rajput states retained their indestructible spirit of insubordination. Gujarat under the Vaghelas, besides Dhar, Ujjain and Chanderi, were other areas of endemic instability. Bengal and Bihar were for all practical purposes independent of

Delhi, and the south too, was beyond its jurisdiction. In addition, there was the ever-looming external threat posed by the Mongols.

#### **Conquests**

In 1299, Alauddin ordered the imperial army to march against Gujarat. Though the state had been raided more than once, it had not so far been subdued by the Turks. Caught off-guard, the ruler, Karan Vaghela, fled to Devagiri, where he sought shelter from Rama Chandra Deva. Subsequently, with the latter's help, he established himself at Baglana, a territory of Gujarat, adjoining the Deccan.

The Sultanate army, meanwhile, resorted to wholesale plunder and devastation of Gujarat. The state treasures as well as the chief queen, Kamala Devi, fell into enemy hands. The capital, Anhilwara, and other prosperous towns were sacked and the Somnath temple, rebuilt in the mid-twelfth century, again demolished. Describing the event, Amir Khusrau wrote, "they made the temple of Somnath prostrate itself towards the dignified Ka'bah...." The imperial army then proceeded to Cambay and collected valuables from the rich Muslim merchants there. Among the captives taken was a slave, Malik Kafur, who was subsequently to play a pivotal role in Sultanate affairs.

In 1301, Alauddin ordered his forces to lay siege on Ranthambor. The failure of the army prompted the Sultan to oversee the operations himself. Even under his guidance, the blockade



continued for almost a year, forcing Alauddin to resort to trickery to end the stalemate. He won over Hamira Deva's Prime Minister, and successfully concluded the campaign. The women, including the chief queen, committed *jauhar* while the Rajputs led by Hamira Deva came out fighting to the last man.

Between 1302 and 1303, Alauddin launched two expeditions, one against Warangal and the other against Chittor. Warangal, capital of Telengana, was then ruled by Pratap Rudra Deva. The expedition ended in disaster and the army had to be summoned back.

Alauddin himself marched against Chittor, the first ruler after Iltutmish to attempt to subdue it. Associated with Chittor is the tale of the beautiful queen, Padmini, wife of the reigning king, Ratan Singh, immortalised by Malik Mohammad Jaisi in his famous *Padmavat*. Modern historians, however, discount the story as legend.

The siege of Chittor lasted for more than five months. Amir Khusrau states that the Sultan ordered that three thousand *muqaddams* in the region be put to death. Chittor was renamed Khizrabad after the Sultan's son and heir-apparent, Khizr Khan. Ferishta writes that when Alauddin was on his death-bed, the "Rai of Chittor rebelled, tied up the hands and necks of the Sultan's officers and men who were in the fort, and threw them down from the ramparts." In accordance with the time-honoured Rajput tradition, Chittor, thus, once again became independent.

Alauddin also won Siwana, the most important stronghold of Marwar, and

Jalor. Commenting on his Rajput policy, modern scholars assert that though unwilling to endure a rebellious Rajput ruler, Alauddin acknowledged that the annexation of Rajasthan was an unviable proposition.

Alauddin conquered Malwa, Ujjain, Dhar and Chanderi. In 1306-07, he undertook two operations, one against Rai Karan, the other against Rama Chandra of Devagiri, who had withheld tribute for over three years. He emerged victorious in both.

Between 1308-1311, Alauddin's slave, Malik Kafur, undertook several campaigns against the southern kingdoms of the Kakatiyas, Hoysalas and Pandyas. In 1308, he marched against Warangal to avenge a prior defeat, and forced the ruler to pay indemnity. In 1310, he attacked the Hoysala kingdom, plundered numerous temples in the area, and compelled the ruler, Vira Ballala III, to accept vassalage. From here, Kafur marched to the Pandyan kingdom, this being the first time that Sultanate armies reached as far as Madurai. Malik Kafur looted and destroyed the chief temple, proceeded eastwards to the sea coast, reached Rameshwaram, smashed its great temple and built a mosque, which he named after Alauddin. He returned to Delhi in 1311, laden with booty which included 312 elephants, 20,000 horses, 2,750 pounds of gold, equal in value to ten crores of *tankas* and chests of jewels.

But for all the euphoria surrounding these campaigns, politically they yielded limited benefits.



The rulers of Warangal and Dwarasamudra surrendered vast treasures and agreed to pay annual tribute, but it was evident that yearly campaigns would have to be waged to actually procure it. In Mabbar, even this limited arrangement could not be achieved, though Kafur did plunder a number of temples, and also those at Chidambaram.

Alauddin was not initially inclined to annex the southern states, but circumstances pushed him in that direction. Following the death of Rama Chandra Deva in 1315, his sons proclaimed independence, forcing the Sultan to once again dispatch Malik Kafur to the south to assume direct administration of the area. Rama Chandra's son, Shankar Deva was killed in the encounter, but several outlying parts of the Devagiri kingdom rebuffed Delhi's hold, and some remained with Rama Chandra's descendants.

From Devagiri, Kafur marched on Gulbarga and occupied it. He also established garrisons at Raichur and Mudgal, seized the seaports of Dabhol and Chaul, and again invaded the Hoysala kingdom.

In the reign of Alauddin's successor, Mubarak Shah Khalji, Devagiri was subdued once again and placed under a Muslim governor. Warangal was also attacked and compelled to pay tribute. Mubarak Shah's slave, Khusrau Khan, raided Mabbar, but could make no conquests there.

### Mongols

The year of the Gujarat invasion also saw the Chaghataya Mongol ruler, Duwa Khan, send an army against India which marched into Punjab but was repulsed by Alauddin's forces. Subsequently, the Mongols, taking advantage of Alauddin's concerns elsewhere, again invaded India but returned after a two-month siege of Delhi.

They undertook two more raids, one in 1305-06 and another in 1306-07. In 1305-06, they plundered the Sivaliks, but the sharp response of the Delhi army forced them to surrender. Barani records that as many as 20,000 horses belonging to the dead Mongols fell into the hands of the Sultan.

The following year, the Mongols returned with three contingents under three different commanders, instead of a unified single force. Once again, they were trounced. The Delhi army pursued them to the frontier, killing and capturing as many as possible. Thus the Mongol terror effectively came to an end.

### Land Revenue

Alauddin's determination to maintain a large standing army at low cost led him to make innovative changes in the taxation system and price mechanism.

The rate of taxation in pre-Islamic India was usually one-sixth of the produce and appears to have been far less than the exactions under the Delhi Sultans. In the early Sultanate period, land tax as such was not levied, and instead a tribute was imposed on the



defeated Hindu rulers (called *rais* and *ranas*). The latter themselves collected land revenue from the village headmen (*khots*, *chaudhuris* and *muqaddams*) in their kingdoms and used it to pay the tribute. The Islamic land tax, called *kharaj*, was actually enforced only in the former Ghaznavid territories of western Punjab and may have been extended to the area adjoining Delhi by the end of the thirteenth century.

Under Alauddin, *kharaj* in the form of a proper land tax was levied over large parts of northern India, at the rate of fifty per cent of the produce, the maximum permitted by the Hanafi school of Islamic law prevalent in the Sultanate.

The main source of information on Alauddin's fiscal policies are the chronicles of Barani. Barani links the Sultan's policies to a conscious attempt to reduce the power of the Hindu chiefs, and later, to the Sultan's desire to maintain a huge army at the lowest possible cost, as a safety device against the Mongol invasions.

The main features of the land tax system under Alauddin were the high revenue demand, the manner of its implementation, and the additional levies imposed on the peasantry. The Sultan ordered all cultivable land be measured per *biswa* (one twentieth of a *bigha*). The yield was also estimated per *biswa*. The estimated yield was multiplied by the total number of *biswas* held by a cultivator in order to calculate his overall produce. The state demand was fixed at half of this estimated produce.

The land tax was normally required to be paid in cash, which forced the peasants to enter the money market. Barani recounts that the Sultan's agents were so grasping that the peasants were compelled to sell their standing crops to the grain merchants to meet their tax obligations. In the Doab area, the *kharaj* was collected entirely in grain and stored in state grain houses for release in times of scarcity. In addition to *kharaj*, Alauddin realised two more taxes from the peasants, the *charai* (grazing tax) and *garhi* (tax on dwellings).

Alauddin's policies were not only harsh on the peasantry, but also seriously undermined the position of Hindu intermediaries like the *khots* and *muqaddams*. The intermediaries traditionally collected land revenue from the peasants on behalf of the state, in return for certain benefits. Alauddin, however, taxed the intermediaries at the same rate as the peasants and also made them liable to the *charai* and *ghari* taxes. Barani states that the *khots* and *muqaddams* were so impoverished by these measures that "No gold, silver, *tankas*, *jitals* or superfluous commodities, which are the causes of rebellion, were to be found in the houses of the Hindus..."

Further, to reduce their chances of rebellion, Alauddin forbade them from riding and bearing arms. Alauddin's fiscal measures were, however, abandoned by his successor, Mubarak Shah.



### Market Regulations

Alauddin's policy of storing grains in royal granaries, besides serving as a hedge against famines, was vital to his price control strategy. Since the Sultan wanted to maintain a large army on relatively modest pay, he had to ensure that essential commodities were available at low prices. He therefore fixed the maximum price of a number of goods such as wheat, barley, rice, pulses, cloth, sugar, sugarcane, fruit, animal fat, besides slaves, horses and livestock.

Ferishta states that the price regulations were meant for the greater part of the Sultan's dominions. Some scholars however argue that they were implemented only in the capital city. In Delhi, a central grain market (*mandi*) was set up with subsidiary shops in every quarter (*mohalla*) of the city. A separate bazaar (*serai-i-adl*) dealt with cloth, sugar, herbs, dry fruits, butter and lamp oil, while there was one for horses, slaves and cattle, and another for all other commodities.

To ensure effective implementation of state-determined prices, Alauddin appointed a superintendent of the market (*Shahna-i-mandi*) who was assisted by an intelligence officer. A strict watch was kept on the activities of the merchants to prevent them from hoarding grain or other goods. A register was maintained of all traders in the kingdom, who were required to give written undertakings that they would bring specified amounts of merchandise annually for sale in the *serai-i-adl*. A network of spies informed

the Sultan of any violation of his orders, and harsh punishments, including the imposition of fines, imprisonment, expulsion from the capital, and cutting flesh from the face were imposed on the defaulters.

It is said that the overall effect of Alauddin's policies was to transfer a significantly larger share of the agricultural surplus from the countryside to the towns and from the Hindu chiefs to the Muslim governing class. Historians have noted the essentially militaristic thrust of Alauddin's economic ventures. There was a clear link, a scholar remarks, between the assertion of Muslim paramountcy through the greater part of the subcontinent and Alauddin's administrative reforms, which enabled the Sultan to raise a larger number of troops on lower pay.

### Standing Army

Alauddin was the first Sultan of Delhi to provide for a permanent standing army. Ferishta has estimated that the central army consisted of 4,75,000 cavalymen, in addition to a large number of infantrymen. The Sultan lavished considerable personal attention on the organisation, equipment, and discipline of his military establishment and introduced the practices of *dagh* (branding of horses with the imperial insignia) and *chehra* (descriptive accounts of soldiers) to improve its efficiency.

### Successors

After Alauddin's death in 1316, Malik Kafur connived to place a six-year-old



prince on the throne, overlooking the claims of the Sultan's older sons. Alauddin's bodyguards, however, killed Kafur shortly afterwards, paving the way for the late Sultan's eldest son, Mubarak Shah, to ascend the throne. After a brief reign, he was overthrown by his officer, Khusrau Khan, who proclaimed himself sovereign.

There are conflicting views about Khusrau Khan. A convert of the Parwari caste, it is said that like Harihara and Bukka who founded the Vijayanagar empire, he also reverted to his ancestral faith. Medieval writers of the time charge him with apostasy, and record the popular rejoicing that Delhi was once again under Hindu rule. On his accession, his community unleashed a reign of terror on the house of the Khaljis.

Another version, however, states that the Turkish *amirs* and *maliks* resented Khusrau Khan because of his origins, and therefore accused him of promoting idol worship in the palace. This view sees Khusrau Khan's rule as the second attempt by Indian Muslims to gain political ascendancy, the first being the endeavour by Imaduddin Raihan, who became prime minister for barely a year before falling prey to the racial arrogance of the Turks.

Be that as it may, in 1320, a group of officers led by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq rose in revolt, defeated and killed Khusrau Khan, thereby clearing the way for a new dynasty.

#### Nobility Under the Khaljis

The rise of the Khaljis marked a downturn in Turkish domination of

Sultanate polity. The Khaljis were a nomadic people from the regions of Bust and Zamindawar, who were probably of Turkish stock but came to be regarded as different from the Turks. The word 'Turk' now specifically implied the Turkish slaves, who chafed at the Khalji ascent.

Jalaluddin Khalji appointed fellow-Khalaj tribesmen to important posts, but also promoted several of Balban's nobles. The major change in the composition of the nobility occurred under Alauddin, and has been summed up by scholars as the "Khalji revolution." Barani divides Alauddin's reign into three periods as far as the ruling class is concerned. In the first phase those who helped him seize the throne prospered; in the second, the bureaucrats; and in the third, his slave commander, Malik Kafur.

Two groups which rose to prominence under Alauddin were the Afghans and the Sultans' Indian slave officers. Alauddin is said to have owned fifty thousand slaves, mostly natives of India acquired in raids against native kingdoms. The Indian slaves generally converted to Islam and some like the eunuch, Malik Kafur, were appointed to high office. In the last years of his reign, Alauddin became increasingly dependent on his slaves and eunuchs and removed many experienced administrators from office.

#### The Tughlaqs (A.D. 1320-1412)

##### Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq

Contemporary sources refer to Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq as belonging to



the Qarauna tribe. While the origins of the word Qarauna remain obscure, it perhaps denoted a mixed race – the descendants of Mongol or Turkish fathers and non-Turkish mothers. Before ascending the throne, Ghiyasuddin had distinguished himself by successfully defending the Sultanate from Mongol attacks, and had served as Alauddin's *muqta* in Dipalpur for several years.

Ghiyasuddin was confronted with a host of problems on his accession. Not only was imperial rule challenged in large parts of the country, the administrative machinery was also severely undermined. In the short duration of his rule, he tried to address some of these issues.

#### Conquests

Ghiyasuddin attempted to restore the authority of the Sultanate in the Deccan. He sent two expeditions against the Kakatiya ruler of Warangal, under the command of his son, Jauna Khan (the future Muhammad bin Tughlaq). The first expedition ended in defeat in the face of heroic resistance by the Kakatiyas, but the second managed to secure the surrender of the kingdom. Available records indicate that in 1323, Prince Jauna undertook a campaign against Mabar, whereafter he led a not so successful operation against the kingdom of Orissa.

In A.D. 1324, the Sultan himself directed a campaign against Bengal, which had been an independent principality since the death of Balban,

and annexed eastern and southern Bengal.

In A.D. 1325, Ghiyasuddin was succeeded by his son, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who, according to some accounts, had a hand in the accident that killed his father.

#### Muhammad bin Tughlaq

Muhammad bin Tughlaq is one of the most controversial figures in Sultanate history, caricatured for his quixotic projects and the exceptionally large number of revolts that rocked his kingdom. The near unanimous contemporary condemnation of the Sultan could perhaps be attributed to his open consorting with Hindus and *jogis*, which provoked chroniclers like Isami and Barani to denounce him as irreligious. Isami went so far as to castigate the Sultan as a *kafir* and call for a general uprising against him.

Many influential Muslims, including *ulema*, *qazis*, *khatibs* (preachers) and jurists participated in the rebellions against the Sultan. Muhammad ruthlessly put such dissidents to death, thus further estranging the community's elites.

#### Transfer of Capital

Muhammad bin Tughlaq is best remembered for one of his earliest ventures, the so-called transfer of capital. Barani states that in 1326-27, the Sultan decided to shift his capital from Delhi to Devagiri (renamed Daulatabad) in the Deccan because it was more centrally located. Isami, however, alleges that the Sultan was suspicious of the people of Delhi and



in order to break their power, thought of driving them in the direction of Maharashtra. According to some modern historians, the project was dictated by the paucity of Muslims in the Deccan and the Sultan's desire to make Daulatabad a centre of Islamic culture.

Medieval historians claim that when the plan began to be implemented in 1328-29, the Sultan gave gold, cash, and grants of land in the Deccan to those who complied with his orders. The project was abandoned in 1335-36 and the Sultan permitted those who wished to return to Delhi to do so.

There is some dispute over the identity of the groups required to leave the capital and the extent of the depopulation of Delhi. Barani says the migration of population took place in two stages; in the first phase, the Sultan's mother, her household and those of the *grandees* shifted. Subsequently, the people of the townships (*qasabat*) around Delhi and the inhabitants of the capital made the move down south.

It may be noted that when medieval chroniclers referred to the people (*khalq*), they meant the leading Muslim families of the capital and not the entire populace. Similarly, the term *shahr* (city) had two meanings in the context of Delhi. When Barani invoked Delhi, he often implied only the old city, the Qila Rai Pithora of Aibak and Iltutmish, and not the subsequent settlements and palaces at Kilokhri, Siri, Hazar Sutun and Tughlaqabad.

### Token Currency

In 1330-31 the Sultan recruited a huge army estimated at between 4,70,000 and 3,70,000 for the Khurasan expedition. This was in addition to the normal military establishment. The army was disbanded after a year due to the inability of the treasury to pay its wages. The problem of raising such a huge force was aggravated by a change in the mode of payment, with troops now receiving their pay directly from the revenue department. At precisely this time, the Sultan embarked on his token currency experiment.

Barani says that Muhammad bin Tughlaq's plans to conquer foreign lands and his boundless generosity to foreigners had depleted the treasury, necessitating the token currency experiment. It has generally been accepted that the contemplated Khurasan expedition and the subsequent Qarachil fiasco had placed a strain on the Sultan's resources. Yet some scholars have argued that these did not bankrupt the Sultan, for when the currency experiment failed he redeemed the token coins in gold and silver. These scholars speculate that the token currency scheme may have been dictated by the worldwide shortage of silver.

The Sultan issued a bronze coin (*jital*) in place of the silver *tanka* and ordered that it be accepted as a token equivalent of the *tanka*. The bronze coinage remained in circulation for three years, roughly from 1329-1332. The project failed due to the rampant



circulation of fake coins. In the countryside, Hindu chiefs used them to meet their land-tax obligations. In Barani's narrative, every Hindu household turned into a mint. The government was ultimately forced to recall the coins and issue gold and silver *tankas* in exchange.

### The Khurasan and Qarachil Projects

There is some confusion regarding the exact geographical location of Khurasan. Barani believes it was Iraq; Ferishta, on the other hand, says that a large number of foreign *amirs* had convinced the Sultan that the conquest of Iran and Turan would be a walkover. Some modern historians have argued that there was a political vacuum in Central Asia and Persia which Muhammad bin Tughlaq wanted to avail of. Others believe that Khurasan denoted the regions of present-day northern Afghanistan, then in possession of the Chaghataya Mongols, and that the mission was intended to tackle the Mongol menace.

Tarmashirin was the most important leader of the Chaghataya Mongols after Duwa Khan. He invaded India, but was defeated by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and soon afterwards converted to Islam. It is said that the Khurasan project was abandoned as friendly ties were now established between Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Tarmashirin. Muhammad bin Tughlaq also established cordial relations with the Il-Khanid Mongols, and revived Jalaluddin Khalji's policy of granting employment to the Mongols.

Barani says that a part of the Khurasan army was sent to Qarachil. Again there is no consensus regarding the region this implies. Some scholars have identified Qarachil with the Kumaon and Garhwal regions, while others believe it refers to Kashmir.

Whatever the intended destination may have been, it is indisputable that the Sultan's army was badly routed in the mountains, and only a small fraction returned to recount the story of its horrific fate.

### Taxation in the Doab

The expenditure of the Khurasan army forced the Sultan to increase the rate of taxation in the Doab. Since the *kharaj* already stood at half the produce, the enhanced revenue demand created widespread unrest among the cultivators.

Barani records that, "The Hindus set fire to the grain heaps and burnt them, and drove away cattle from their homes. The Sultan ordered the *shiqqdars* and *faujdars* (revenue collectors and commanders) to lay waste and plunder the country. They killed many *khots* and *muqaddams*, and many they blinded. Those who escaped gathered in bands and fled into jungles; and the country became ruined. The Sultan in those times went to the district of Baran (modern Bulandshahr), on a hunting expedition; he ordered that the entire district of Baran be plundered and laid waste. The Sultan himself plundered and laid waste from Kanauj to Dalmau. Whoever was captured was killed. Most



(peasants) ran away and fled into the jungles. They (the Sultan's troops) surrounded the jungles and killed everyone whom they found within the jungles."

In Delhi, the non-arrival of grain from the Doab created an acute food shortage, and the onset of drought aggravated the situation. The famine spread to Malwa and eastern Punjab. Barani reports that many of the residents of Delhi either died or fled the city. The Sultan sanctioned campaigns to plunder grain from Kateher, but such brutal devices failed to retrieve the situation. The Sultan was compelled to permit migration from Delhi to the fertile regions of Awadh, and according to Ibn Battuta, himself shifted temporarily (for two and half years) to Swargadwari on the Ganges. The famine is said to have lasted seven years; the Sultan advanced large sums of money to peasants to revive cultivation, but his endeavours met with little success.

Barani recounts that greedy men, men in distress, and reckless adventurers undertook to bring three hundred thousand *bighas* of barren land under the plough within three years. They were sanctioned loans (*sondhar*) to the tune of seventy lakh *tankas*, but spent the money on themselves. Mercifully for them, the Sultan died before they could be taken to task and they were thus spared retribution.

### Revolts

The turbulence in the Doab fuelled revolts in distant provinces like Mabbar,

Bengal and Telengana. The Sultan failed to recover Mabbar and also lost Kampili, where a powerful movement to beat back the Delhi armies had commenced. It culminated in 1336 with the foundation of the independent kingdom of Vijayanagar. At this time, a severe plague afflicted his forces and according to Isami, half the commanders and one-third of the troops died in the epidemic. The ever-increasing rebellions after 1334 were largely inspired by the known vulnerability of the imperial army.

The dual crisis of diminution of troops and revenues mortally undermined the Sultanate in the final years of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's reign. Revenue shortfalls following decline in cultivation and loss of several provinces prompted the Sultan to demand higher returns from the remaining regions of the Sultanate. However, the failure to meet these unrealistically high targets led to rebellion by officers contracted to raise these amounts.

### The Revolts of the Amiran-i-Sada

Muhammad bin Tughlaq's last years were gripped by widespread mutinies by foreign nobles called the *amiran-i-sada* or *amirs* of a hundred villages (centurians).

The *amiran-i-sada* are said to have rebelled against the Sultan's new plan for administering the Deccan, by which they were to be superseded and greater central control established over the revenues of Gujarat and the Deccan. The Sultan resorted to this step as



he believed that the *amirs* were withholding large sums of revenue from the central government. The *amiran-i-sada* in Gujarat and the Deccan were additionally disturbed by reports that eighty of their counterparts had been executed at Dhar by the governor.

The *amiran-i-sada* of Daulatabad elected a new king, thus creating the Deccan's first independent kingdom, precursor of the Bahamani kingdom which was to dominate the political scene in the south for the next century and a half.

Expressing his helplessness to Barani, the Sultan said, "My kingdom is diseased and its illness cannot be cured by any medicine. If the physician treats it for lumbago, the fever increases; if he treats it for fever, there is an obstruction of the arteries. Different diseases have appeared in my kingdom simultaneously. If I put things right at one place, disorders appear at another place; if I put them right at the second place, disorders appear at a third place."

He further lamented, "...these days I am angry with the people and the people are angry with me. The people have discovered my mind and I have discovered the evil and rebellious designs of the people. Every remedy I try fails. My remedy for rebels, opponents, disobedient persons and evil-wishers is the sword. I will continue punishing and striking with my sword till it either cuts or misses. The more the people oppose me, the greater will be my punishments."

Muhammad bin Tughlaq died in 1351, pursuing the last major rebel of his reign. Barani pithily commented, "at last the people got rid of him and he got rid of the people."

### Religious Beliefs

His harsh public image notwithstanding, Muhammad bin Tughlaq is recorded to have made overtures to his non-Muslim subjects and their religious leaders. He is known to have patronised Hindus and there are references to his respecting Jain scholars like Jinaprabha Suri, who visited his court at Delhi in 1328. The Sultan seated him by his side, and offered him wealth, land and horses, which the saint declined.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq also ordered the construction of a new *basadi upasraya*, a rest-house for monks. The Sultan is said to have visited the Satrunjaya temples at Palitana. Muhammad Tughlaq also held discourses with several groups of *jogis*. He was perhaps the first Sultan to have participated in the festival of Holi.

However much such acts may have enraged the ulema and the foreign nobility, they did not imply transgression from the tenets of his faith. As Ibn Battuta records, "his standing orders were to the effect that prayers must be recited in congregation and severe punishment was meted out to defaulters."

The Sultan was a disciple of Shaikh Alauddin, a grandson of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar, and was equally deferential towards



Shaikh Ruknuddin Multani. He was the first Sultanate ruler to visit the shrine of Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer and the tomb of Salar Masud Ghazi at Bahraich. In addition, he had mausoleums built over the graves of Miran Mulhim at Badaun, Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya at Delhi, Shaikh Ruknuddin at Multan, Shaikh Alauddin at Ajudhan, as well as of several other saints.

#### Firuz Shah Tughlaq

Muhammad bin Tughlaq was succeeded by his kinsman, Firuz Shah Tughlaq. The new Sultan has been candidly described as "not even a mediocre military leader," and certainly "not the stuff conquerors are made of." The Sultanate was in need of urgent action to compensate for the huge territorial losses suffered during the preceding reign. Firuz however was unable to accomplish the task.

#### Expeditions

In 1353 and 1359, for instance, he led two campaigns to Ikhdala in Bengal. On both occasions he tasted early success, but made peace without effecting the annexation of the region. As he returned, he lost his way and was able to rejoin the rest of his army only after six months.

Firuz's longest campaign was to Thatta (Sind) and Gujarat, during which he bemoaned the sufferings of his soldiers and pledged never to go to war again. The Thatta expedition has been described as the most mismanaged military operation in the history of the Delhi Sultanate. During the prolonged

siege of Thatta, more than three-fourths of the horses in the imperial army perished in an epidemic, while the shortage of grain led to an escalation in prices and caused great misery to the soldiers.

The Sultan decided to march on to Gujarat and return to Thatta later to continue the attack. His Sindhi guards, however, deliberately misled the army into the barren Rann of Kutch, and it was only after immense privations and heavy loss of lives that the army finally reached Gujarat. The second assault on Thatta, though difficult, ended in Firuz Shah's favour only due to fortuitous circumstances.

Firuz was ultimately unsuccessful against other kingdoms as well. He marched against the ruler of Orissa, uprooted the idol of Jagannath and desecrated the temple. He then blockaded an island near the sea coast where nearly a hundred thousand inhabitants of Jajnagar (Orissa) had taken refuge, and converted "the island into a basin of blood by the massacre of the unbelievers." He obtained considerable booty when the ruler sued for peace and also agreed to supply elephants yearly. Firuz withdrew without being able to change the existing power equations in the state.

His most successful campaign was against Nagarkot, whose ruler had repudiated Delhi's suzerainty. The Sultan besieged the fortress for several months. The Rai finally surrendered, consented to pay tribute, and requested Firuz Shah not to destroy the *Jwalamukhi teertha*.



### Mongols

There were no Mongol attacks in the reign of Firuz Tughlaq, power by now having passed from the Mongols to the Barlas Turks. Between 1370-1380, the Mongols in fact lost three-fourths of their world-wide dominions.

A Barlas Turk, Timur, wound up the remnants of the Chaghatay Mongol kingdom and attacked Delhi in 1398. He was married into the imperial house of Chengiz Khan. Babur and the Mughals took considerable pride in proclaiming descent from Timur. The Mughals were actually Barlas Turks, not Mongols, though they also acknowledged their links with the latter.

### Hereditary Assignments

Contemporary historians have pointed out that Firuz Shah's reign witnessed only a solitary revolt by a Muslim nobleman. One explanation may be the wide latitude the Sultan gave his *amirs*. He distributed a larger territory of the Sultanate among them as *iqtas*, increased their salaries, and made their positions, titles and *iqtas* inheritable while virtually doing away with government supervision of their activities. These measures weakened the regime, though they undoubtedly endeared it to the nobility.

Afif records that Firuz also paid most of his soldiers by land assignments and made all posts in the army hereditary, which had a deleterious effect on the efficiency of the force. It is said that the descendants of military men "ceased to be military men and became pensioners entitled to land revenue from specified villages."

Further, no mechanism was instituted to prevent assignees from overtaxing the peasants in the lands assigned to them and keeping the enforced exactions to themselves. As a consequence of the Sultan's policies, the army became vice-ridden.

Firuz Shah's reign has in fact been described as the greatest age of corruption in medieval India. The case of Imadulmulk Bashir, the minister of war, vividly illustrates the conditions then prevalent. Bashir began his career as an inherited slave of Firuz, and in the course of his service is said to have accumulated wealth to the tune of thirteen crores, when the state's annual income was six crores and seventy-five lakh *tankas*. In other words, his personal wealth equaled the state's total income for two years!

### Public Works

Firuz was far more interested in erecting new buildings, repairing old ones, and constructing canals. Among the important towns founded by him may be mentioned Fatehabad, Hissar, Firuzpur, Jaunpur and Firuzabad. He ordered the construction of five canals, the longest of which ran for a hundred and fifty miles from the Yamuna. Firuz's personal earnings from these canals were around two lakh *tankas* per annum, which comprised only a portion of his private income. Afif says "no king of Delhi had so much personal property as Firuz Shah; ultimately a separate department with its own officers had to be established to take charge of his personal properties."



### Religious Orientation

After a brief hiatus under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the influence of the ulema in state affairs revived under Firuz. His reign, in fact, was characterised by a sharp escalation of religious sentiment in the public realm. Firuz is reputed to have been particularly harsh to his Hindu subjects (his mother was the daughter of a Bhatti chieftain from Punjab).

Firuz Shah was the first Muslim ruler to impose the *jaziya* on the Brahmins, who had hitherto been exempted from the tax. This agitated the Brahmins so much that they gathered outside the Sultan's palace and threatened to immolate themselves. The Sultan responded that immolation was the only way they could escape the tax. Leading Hindu citizens helped resolve the deadlock by volunteering to pay the tax on behalf of the Brahmins.

The Sultan recorded several of his acts, such as the destruction of three new temples at Malwa, Salihpur and Gohana. He was also enthusiastic about proselytisation, as he confessed in his autobiography. "I encouraged my infidel subjects," he wrote, "to embrace the religion of the Prophet, and I proclaimed that every one who repeated the creed and became a Musalman should be exempt from *jiziya* or poll-tax. Information of this came to the ears of the people at large, and great numbers of Hindus presented themselves and were admitted to the honour of Islam."

Historians have noted that the *jaziya* was not continually levied on the

Hindus throughout the Sultanate period. The principal reason for this, they say, was that the state lacked the administrative apparatus needed for such an enormous exercise. The power of the Sultans was tenuous and sporadic beyond the principal centres of their authority. In the countryside, *jaziya* was merged with the land tax (*kharaj*) and not collected separately.

In 1374-75, after a visit to the tomb of Salar Masud Ghazi at Bahraich, the Sultan became, in the words of a modern historian, definitely "fanatical." He ordered the mural paintings in his palace erased, gold and silver vessels melted, and the use of silks and brocades stopped.

In a further display of orthodoxy, Muslim women were asked not to venture out of their homes or visit tombs outside the city of Delhi. The punishment of Shi'is and dissident Islamic groups like the Ismailis increased.

### Successors

Firuz died in A.D. 1388 and was succeeded by a string of weak rulers. The catastrophic invasion of Timur occurred in the reign of one of his successors (Mahmud Tughlaq) and hastened the end of the Tughlaq dynasty.

### Nobility Under the Tughlaqs

Modern historians have provided a comprehensive account of the composition of the ruling class under the Tughluqs. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's



initial coterie comprised his kinsmen, fellow military commanders of the frontier, and Mongol dissidents. This limited support base obliged him to court Alauddin's nobles in his early years, but the alliance was short-lived and ultimately many Alai nobles were executed. In their place, the Sultan promoted officers from the north-west.

His son, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, also exhibited a marked inclination for men from this region, who comprised almost fifty per cent of the appointments made on his accession. They included Turks, natives of Mongolia and Persians. The Sultan also dispatched agents to the Persian Gulf to recruit Arabs in his service.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq enlisted a number of slaves, including Blacks (*Habashis*), at least one of whom became governor. Indian converts were also entrusted with senior positions. Azizuddin Khammar was appointed governor of Malwa while Qawamul Mulk Maqbul, who belonged to the Warangal nobility and was converted by

the Sultan, was successively made governor of Multan, Badaun and Gujarat, and finally *naib-wazir*. The sons of the *rai* of Kampili, who converted to Islam, were also given suitable employment.

A number of Hindus were inducted into government service. The Chunar inscription mentions a Hindu *wazir* named Sai Raj. Others included Dhara, appointed *naib wazir* of the Deccan and Ratan and Bhiran Rai, respectively the governors of Sehwan and Gulbarga. The older noble families resented the recruitment of such disparate elements, and many of them revolted against the Sultan's policies. Ratan and Bhiran were both murdered.

Firuz Shah was passionately fond of acquiring slaves and distributed a number of offices among them. The royal slaves are said to have numbered 1,80,000, of whom as many as forty thousand were in attendance at court or constituted part of the Sultan's retinue. Indian converts to Islam, related to the Sultan by marriage, were also represented in the nobility, as were a few local princes.



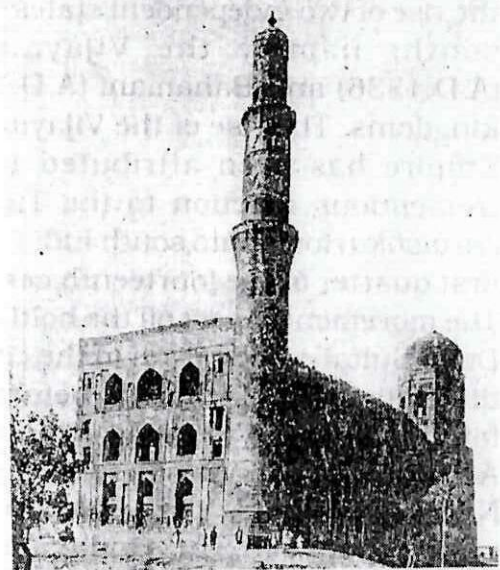
**Exercises**

1. Give a brief account of Alauddin Khalji's Rajput policy.
2. Describe the land revenue measures of Alauddin Khalji. To what extent can they be regarded as detrimental to the khots, muqaddams and chaudhuris?
3. What were the main features of Alauddin's market regulations? How were they linked to his expansionist drive?
4. Describe the composition of the nobility under the Khaljis.
5. Give a brief account of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's transfer of capital project.
6. What was Muhammad bin Tughlaq's token currency experiment, and why did it fail?
7. Describe the military expeditions undertaken by Firuz Shah Tughlaq.
8. Briefly state the religious orientation of Firuz Shah Tughlaq.
9. Describe the composition of the nobility under the Tughlaqs.
10. Write short notes on:
  - a) Alauddin's invasion of Chittor
  - b) Mohammad bin Tughlaq's Khurasan and Qarachil expeditions
  - c) The revolts of the *amiran-i-sada*
  - d) Hereditary assignments under Firuz.
11. On a map of India mark the extent of the Delhi Sultanate in the first half of the fourteenth century.

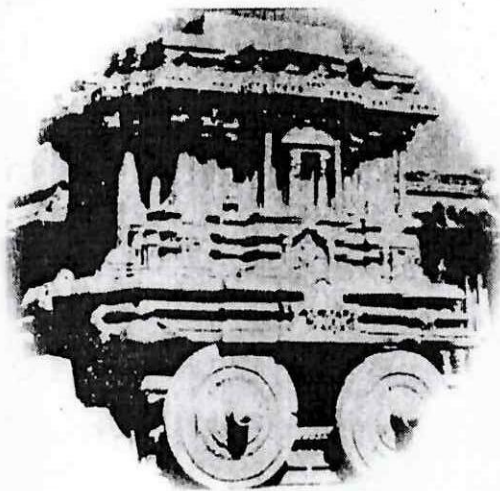


# CHAPTER 9

## THE VIJAYANAGAR AND BAHAMANI KINGDOMS







MUHAMMAD BIN TUGHLAQ's reign witnessed the rise of two independent states in the south, namely the Vijayanagar (A.D.1336) and Bahamani (A.D.1347) kingdoms. The rise of the Vijayanagar Empire has been attributed to the tremendous reaction to the Turkish (*Turushka*) foray into south India in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The movement to cast off the hold of the Delhi Sultans had begun in the coastal districts of Andhra well before the founding of the Vijayanagar kingdom. According to the Vilasa grant, Prolaya Nayaka had made himself lord of the region between the Godavari and Krishna rivers and "restored to the Brahmins their *agraharas*, which had been granted to them by former kings but forcibly taken away from them by those wrong-doers (the *Turushkas*)..." After his death, his mantle fell on his cousin, Kapaya Nayaka.

Meanwhile, in 1335, the rebellion of Ahsan Shah in Mabbar compelled Muhammad bin Tughlaq to contemplate retaliatory action in the

south. But an outbreak of plague in his camp forced him to abandon the campaign. Kapaya Nayaka availed of the situation, expelled the Muslim governor of Telengana, captured Warangal and assumed the titles of *Andhradesadhisvara* and *Andhrasuratrana*.

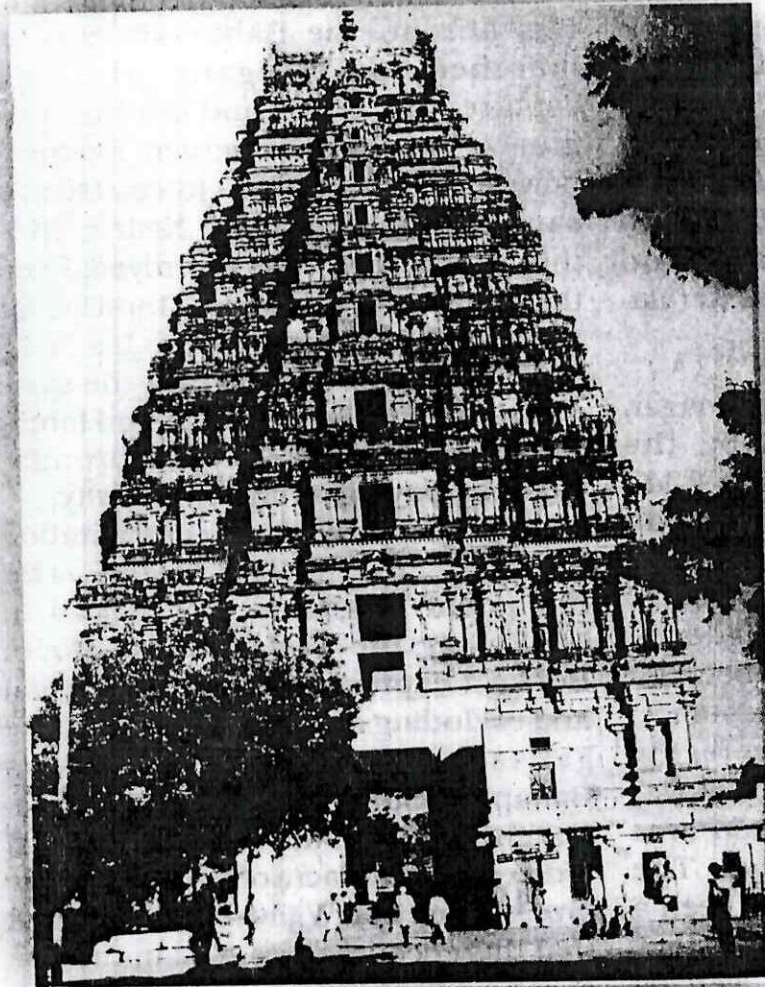
### Founding of Vijayanagar

The uprising now spread to the kingdom of Kampili, where the populace, possibly under the leadership of Somadevaraja, revolted against the Sultanate governor. On the advise of his councillors, Muhammad bin Tughlaq despatched the brothers Harihara and Bukka to the south. The two had been in his custody since he had overrun the kingdom of Kampili, and had been converted to Islam. The Sultan took oaths of loyalty from them before sending them to tackle the situation in Kampili. The brothers were enthusiastically greeted by the local people and soon established peace in the region.

According to the Kapaluru and Bagepalli grants, in 1336 Harihara and Bukka laid the foundations of the city of Vijayanagar, on the inspiration of the great sage and scholar Vidyaranya. Vidyaranya remains something of an enigma. Not much is known about him. Some scholars identify him with Madhava, the first prime minister of Vijayanagar, while others associate him with Vidya Bharati of the Sringeri Math.

Contemporary Muslim scholars testify that some persons connected with the old kingdom of Kampili were





*Vijayanagar, Pampapati temple, A.D. 1510, East Gopuram*

sent by Muhammad bin Tughlāq to pacify the region and that they turned against him and laid the foundations of a Hindu empire. Isami and Barani too, state that the brothers apostatised from Islam.

Harihara, Bukka and their three other brothers were the sons of Sangama, and the dynasty they founded is known as the Sangama

dynasty. Three other dynasties, the Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu, subsequently ruled over Vijayanagar.

Harihara and his brothers demonstrated tremendous zeal in defending and extending the frontiers of their state. After the Sultan of Madura executed the Hoysala ruler, Vira Ballala III, often described as the champion of Hindus in the south, the Hoysala state was greatly enfeebled. The question was whether it would be annexed by Madura or Vijayanagar. By 1346, the latter had succeeded in incorporating the entire Hoysala kingdom.

For almost four decades, Vijayanagar wrestled with the Sultans of Madura, their main rivals in the south. Ibn Battuta has provided a chilling account of the massacre of Hindus by the fourth Sultan of Madura. Meanwhile, in 1356, Harihara was succeeded by his brother, Bukka I. While he engaged the Bahamani Sultans in the north, his son, Kumara Kampana, successfully challenged the



state of Madura, even killing one of its Sultans. He also reinstated the divine images in the Rajasimheswara temple at Kanchi and the Ranganathaswami temple at Srirangam. Finally, by 1377, the Sultanate of Madura was vanquished. The Vijayanagar empire now extended over the whole of south India upto Rameshwaram and included Tamil lands as well as Kerala.

#### Vijayanagar-Bahamani Conflicts

The northern expansion of Vijayanagar, however, was challenged by the Bahamani kingdom founded in 1347 by Alauddin Hasan Shah Bahman, an Afghan rebel officer of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. There were three areas of rivalry between the two kingdoms, which led to incessant clashes between them through most of their existence. The areas of contention were the Tungabhadra doab, the Krishna-Godavari basin and the Konkan area in the Maratha country. The Tungabhadra doab had earlier been a source of friction between the Western Chalukyas and Cholas, as well as between the Yadavas and Hoysalas. Both the Krishna-Godavari basin and the Maratha country were extremely fertile regions with flourishing ports that controlled the foreign trade in the area.

An early encounter pitched Bukka I and Kapaya Nayaka, the Raja of Telengana, against Muhammad Shah I, the son and successor of Alauddin Hasan Shah, in which the former suffered a setback. Undaunted, Vinayaka Deva, the son of the ruler of

Telengana, kept up the crusade against the Bahamani kingdom. To deal with this affront, the Bahamani Sultan marched to Telengana in 1362, captured the prince and put him to a cruel death. On its return journey, however, the Bahamani forces faced a savage counter-attack. Nearly two-thirds of the army was destroyed. Even the Sultan was wounded. Thirsting for revenge, the Sultan let loose his army on Telengana. For two years the state was ransacked by the Bahamani forces till finally Kapaya Nayaka brought peace by paying a huge indemnity.

A particularly bitter confrontation between the Vijayanagar and Bahamani kingdoms commenced in 1367 over the Tungabhadra doab. Bukka I captured the fort of Mudgal and excluding one man, put the entire garrison to sword. The furious Bahamani Sultan recaptured Mudgal, marched in pursuit of Bukka I, and ordered the massacre of the inhabitants around the city of Vijayanagar. It is said that this encounter resulted in the loss of half a million lives. Subsequently, the two rulers agreed that non-combatants should not be molested in future wars. The struggles continued in later decades without greatly altering power equations.

In 1377, Bukka I died and was succeeded by his son, Harihara II.

Bukka I has been described as a vigorous warrior and statesman, who freed practically the whole of the south from foreign domination. He renovated temples and revived *agharas*. He patronised a number of scholars, the



most eminent among them being Sayanacharya, whose voluminous commentaries on the *Vedas* are highly rated even today. Sayana's brother, Madhava, was the Prime Minister of Vijayanagar.

Ferishta has provided a glowing testimony of the condition of Vijayanagar in the closing years of Bukka's reign. He says, "the princes of the house of Bahamani maintained their superiority by valour only; for in power, wealth and the extent of the country, the rajas of Beejanagar greatly exceeded them..."

#### Entanglements Continue

Under Harihara II, the Vijayanagar forces found their eastward expansion halted by the Reddis of Kondavidu, who were also attempting to enlarge their kingdom. Further, following the slaying of Kapaya Nayaka, a long-term ally of Vijayanagar, the Velama king had seized Warangal and established control over large parts of Telengana. The Velama rulers allied with the Bahamani Sultans against Vijayanagar. On the west coast, however, Harihara II was successful in taking Belgaum and Goa from the Bahamani rulers.

Harihara II has been estimated as a great sovereign who, during two decades of peace, was able to consolidate the Vijayanagar state and enhance its imperial dignity. He was a devotee of Virupaksha (Siva) but equally patronised Vaishnavas and Jains. Irugapa, author of the *Nanartha Ratnamala* and a Jain, was one of his leading generals.

Harihara II was succeeded by his third son, Deva Raya I. Soon after his accession, conflict broke out with the Bahamani kingdom in 1406-07, in which he was forced to sue for peace, give his daughter in marriage to the Bahamani Sultan, in addition to ceding Bankapur and paying a large indemnity. This was followed by a decade of peace between the two states. Deva Raya utilised the opportunity to tackle the Reddis and conquer Chaul, Dabhol and the country of the Coromandel.

A fresh war with the Bahamani kingdom broke out in 1417. Deva Raya was now able to wean Warangal away from the Bahamani kingdom and enter into an agreement with it to partition the Reddi kingdom, then rent by internal strife. The collapse of the Warangal-Bahamani nexus changed the political balance in the Deccan and contributed to the crushing defeat of Sultan Firuz Shah Bahamani. The entire territory upto the mouth of the Krishna river was annexed by Deva Raya.

Deva Raya is remembered for his public welfare projects, including the construction of dams across the Tungabhadra and Haridra for enhancing irrigation in the empire. He also made generous grants to temples and priests. The Italian traveller, Nicolo de Conti, who visited Vijayanagar during his reign wrote that he was "more powerful than all the other kings of India."

The last great ruler of the Sangama dynasty was Deva Raya's grandson, Deva Raya II, who ascended the throne



in 1423. Early skirmishes with the Bahamani Sultans convinced him of the need to refurbish his army with better horses and archers. Accordingly, he enlisted two thousand Muslims and advised his Hindu soldiers and officers to learn archery from them. According to Ferishta, he soon had sixty thousand soldiers well-versed in archery, besides eighty thousand cavalry and two hundred thousand infantry. So equipped, he crossed the Tungabhadra river, fought three hard battles with the Bahamani Sultan, at the end of which both sides agreed to maintain the existing frontiers.

Deva Raya II was one of the greatest rulers of the Sangama dynasty, and is sometimes called Immadi Deva Raya. Not only did he maintain the territorial integrity of Vijayanagar, he also secured its north-eastern frontier by annexing the kingdom of Kondavidu. According to the Portuguese writer, Nuniz, the kings of Quilon, Ceylon, Pulicat, Pegu and Tenasserim paid him tribute. Though he leaned towards Vira Saivism, he was tolerant of all sects and religions.

The Persian traveller, Abdur Razzaq, has left an account of the splendour of his kingdom. "The city of Bijanagar," he wrote, "is such that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has never been informed that there has existed anything to equal it in the world..... In the king's palace are several cells, like basins, filled with bullion, forming one mass. All the inhabitants of this country, both those of exalted rank and of an inferior class,

down to the artisans of the bazar, wear pearls, or rings adorned with precious stones, in their ears, on their necks, on their arms, on the upper part of the hand, and on the fingers..."

### **Bahamani Kingdom**

The most important Bahamani ruler during this period was Firuz Shah Bahamani. Most of his reign, of a quarter of a century, (1397 – 1422) was devoted to wars against Vijayanagar and its confederates. He initiated the Bahamani expansion towards Berar by defeating the Gond Raja, Narsing Rai of Kherla. The struggle for control of the Krishna-Godavari basin also revived. In 1419, however, Firuz Shah was defeated in an encounter with Deva Raya I, and abdicated in favour of his brother, Ahmad Shah I, who transferred the Bahamani capital from Gulbarga to Bidar.

The new Sultan began his innings by vowing vengeance on Warangal, whose support to Vijayanagar had contributed to the latter's victories. Ahmad Shah invaded Warangal, defeated and killed its ruler and annexed most of its territories. This greatly enhanced the power of the Bahamani kingdom. Thereafter, Ahmad Shah concentrated his energies on Malwa, Gondwana and the Konkan.

Later, an Iranian immigrant, Mahmud Gawan, became the prime minister of the kingdom and further extended its territories, annexing the ports of Goa and Dabhol from Vijayanagar. He secured the northern frontier of the kingdom against



incursions of the rulers of Malwa. A number of administrative reforms which strengthened the Bahamani kingdom have been attributed to Mahmud Gawan. He was also a patron of arts and learning. The *madarsa* he built at the Bahamani capital could house a thousand teachers and students and attracted scholars from Iran and Iraq.

However, despite his impressive contribution to the state, rivalry

between the Deccani (local Muslims, mostly Sunnis) and Afaqi (foreign Muslims, predominantly Shis) nobles led to his fall from royal favour. He was executed in 1482 at the age of seventy, on the orders of Sultan Muhammad III. This event intensified internal strife and precipitated the division of the Bahamani kingdom into five principalities – Golconda, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Berar and Bidar. During the hundred and seventy-five years of

its existence, the Bahamani kingdom had witnessed the reign of eighteen kings, five of whom were murdered, three deposed, two blinded, while two died of intemperance.

### Climax and Decline of Vijayanagar

Following the death of Deva Raya II, Vijayanagar was thrown into confusion as various contenders battled for the throne. Finally, a new dynasty that of the Saluvas, came to power. It ruled for a brief while and in turn was replaced by the Tuluva dynasty, whose greatest ruler was Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1530).

Krishna Deva Raya not only had to contend with the successor states of the Bahamani kingdom and Orissa, but also the rising power of the Portuguese. The latter were using their control of the seas to intimidate



Madarsa of Mahmud Gawan, Bidar, 1481





*Krishna Deva Raya with his Queens, Andhra Pradesh, Vijayanagar period, sixteenth century*

vassal states of Vijayanagar in the coastal areas to extract concessions from them.

After wresting all the territories upto the Krishna river from the rulers of Orissa, Krishna Deva Raya relaunched the struggle to control the Tungabhadra doab. The Vijayanagar armies overran Raichur and Mudgal, reached Belgaum, sacked Bijapur and ravaged Gulbarga.

Krishna Deva Raya was the ablest of the Vijayanagar sovereigns, and towered over all his contemporaries. He was a talented scholar of Telugu and Sanskrit, and extended patronage to Telugu, Kannada and Tamil scholars. He was extremely solicitous of the

welfare of his subjects and constructed an enormous tank near the capital for purposes of irrigation.

He was also a great philanthropist. There was hardly a major shrine in south India to which he did not make endowments. He gave complete freedom to his subjects to pursue their own faiths, as is testified by the contemporary account of Barbosa, who records, "the king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering any annoyance, and without enquiry whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or heathen. Great equity and justice is observed to all not only by the rulers, but by the people one to another."

After the death of Krishna Deva Raya, a triumvirate headed by Rama Raja assumed power since all his sons were minors. Rama Raja tried to play off the Deccani kingdoms against each other and also entered into an understanding with the Portuguese whereby the latter were to stop the supply of horses to Bijapur. Ultimately, the Deccani states combined to inflict a grievous defeat on Vijayanagar in 1565 at Talikota, also known as the battle of Rakshasa-Tangadi after the two villages near which it was fought. The Vijayanagar forces were considerably hampered by the defection of two generals at a critical juncture in the battle, and the effective use of artillery by the Deccani armies.

But mutual rivalries among the Deccani Sultans enabled Vijayanagar to recover parts of its territory and



survive for almost a hundred years after this battle.

### Contribution

The Vijayanagar era is said by scholars to mark the transition of south Indian society from its medieval past to its modern future. During this period, they say, south Indian society was transformed in several significant ways.

Till the early sixteenth century, the Vijayanagar kings enjoyed only ritual sovereignty in the regions beyond the Deccan. However, the need to improve their military strength in order to meet the Islamic threat changed the nature of their polity. To defray the costs of upgrading the army with better guns and horses and more soldiers, Krishna Deva Raya replaced the Chola and Pandya kings with his own Brahmin officials and military commanders (the Telugu nayaks). They were now required to collect tribute from the local rulers who had hitherto paid nothing

to the Vijayanagar king, and had simply acknowledged his overlordship.

Military modernisation in turn stimulated monetisation and urbanisation of the economy, a trend reinforced by the increased earnings from international trade. The empire possessed numerous ports and had commercial relations with the islands of the Indian Ocean, the Malaya Archipelago, Burma, China, Arabia, Persia, South Africa and Portugal.

Temples aided urbanising trends. Local deities were elevated to high status, leading to a considerable increase in pilgrim traffic and the consequent urbanisation of the surrounding areas. The Vijayanagar era also witnessed an expansion of agriculture from the older zones of riverine cultivation to drier, upland tracts. Cotton and indigo were grown in large quantities to meet the growing overseas demand for Indian textiles.

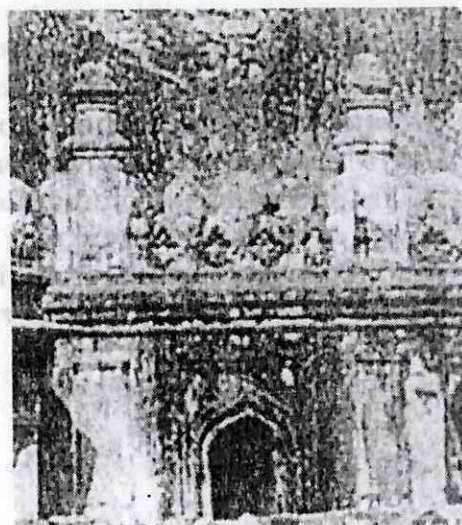
### Exercises

1. Cite an early instance of the southern determination to throw off the yoke of the Delhi Sultanate.
2. What were the events leading to the establishment of the Vijayanagar empire?
3. List the various dynasties that ruled over Vijayanagar.
4. What were the areas of conflict between the Vijayanagar and Bahamani kingdoms?
5. Describe the Vijayanagar-Bahamani conflicts during the reign of Bukka I.
6. Evaluate the reign of Deva Raya II.
7. What was Mahmud Gawan's contribution to the Bahamani kingdom?
8. Give a brief account of the reign of Krishna Deva Raya.

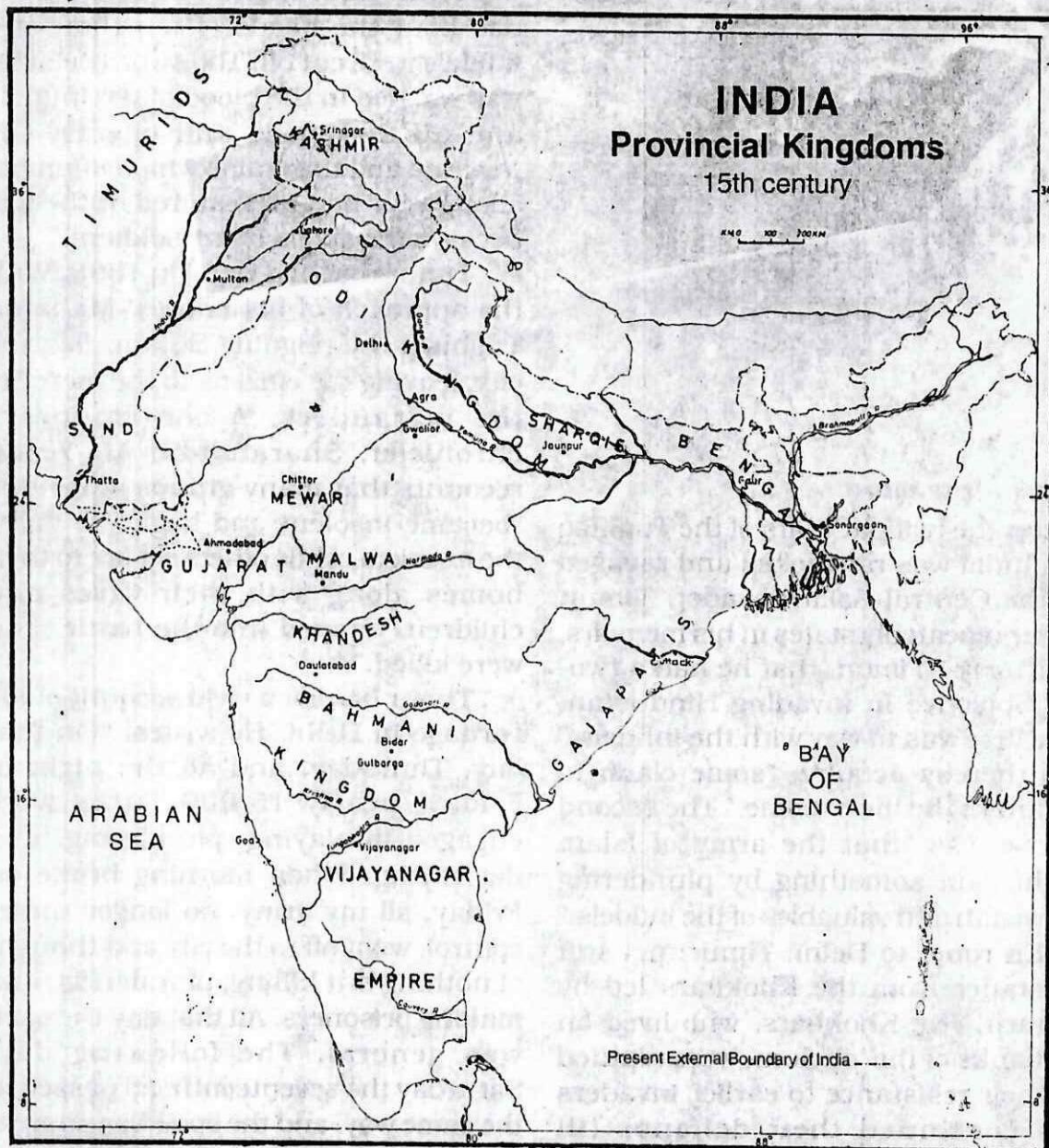


# 10 CHAPTER

## THE TWILIGHT YEARS





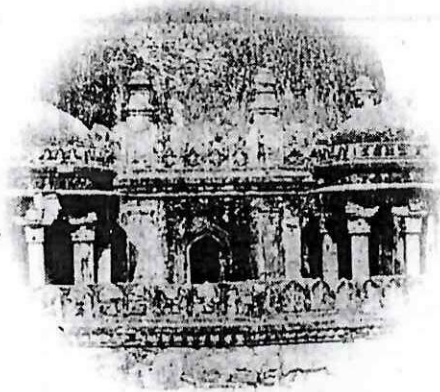


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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.





### Timur's Invasion

**DURING** the twilight years of the Tughlaq era, India was ransacked and ravaged by the Central Asian invader, Timur. Timur repeatedly states in his memoirs, the *Tuzuk-i-Timuri*, that he had a two-fold objective in invading Hindustan. "The first was to war with the infidels," and thereby acquire, "some claim to reward in the life to come." The second motive was "that the army of Islam might gain something by plundering the wealth and valuables of the infidels."

En route to Delhi, Timur met stiff resistance from the Khokhars led by Jusrath. The Khokhars, who lived on the banks of the Jhelum, were reputed for their resistance to earlier invaders and continued their defiance till Aurangzeb's time. Before reaching the capital, Timur plundered countless towns and cities, slaying thousands of infidels and enslaving numberless more. Describing his assault on the fort of Dipalpur, for instance, Timur wrote in his autobiography, "In a short space

of time all the people in the fort were put to the sword, and in the course of one hour the heads of ten thousand infidels were cut off. The sword of Islam was washed in the blood of the infidels and all the goods and effects, the treasure and the grains which for many a long year had been stored in the fort became the spoils of my soldiers."

Timur reached Delhi in 1398. With the approach of his hordes, Mahmud Tughlaq, the reigning Sultan, fled the city, leaving the citizens to the mercy of the marauders. A contemporary chronicler, Sharafuddin Ali Yezdi, recounts that many groups of Hindus "became insolent and began to fight" the invaders, while others set fire to their homes along with their wives and children, jumped into the battle, and were killed.

Timur has left a vivid account of the carnage in Delhi. He writes, "On that day, Thursday, and all the night of Friday, nearly 15,000 Turks were engaged in slaying, plundering, and destroying. When morning broke on Friday, all my army, no longer under control, went off to the city and thought of nothing but killing, plundering, and making prisoners. All that day the sack was general. The following day, Saturday the seventeenth, all passed in the same way, and the spoil was so great that each man secured from fifty to a hundred prisoners, men, women and children. There was no man who took less than twenty.... Excepting the quarter of the sayyids, the ulema and other Musulmans, the whole city was sacked." Despite Timur's transparent



testimony, some modern scholars assert that there is no reason to assume that Muslims were spared in this massacre.

### **The Sayyids (1414 - 1451)**

Before leaving India, Timur summoned Khizr Khan, the relative of an eminent *amir* of Firuz Tughlaq and said, "I assign to you Delhi and all I have conquered." Thus, despite the opposition of a number of Tughlaq nobles, a new ruling house, the Sayyids, occupied the throne of Delhi in 1414.

Yahya Sirhindi, author of the *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, claims that the founder of the Sayyid dynasty was a descendant of the Prophet. The family appears to have originated in Arabia and migrated to Multan, where the governor adopted Khizr Khan's father as his son. Khizr Khan was appointed governor of Multan by Firuz Shah Khalji, but was subsequently expelled from that province. He reappeared on the political scene at the time of Timur's invasion, when he cast his lot with the invader.

The Sayyid dynasty had the shortest lifespan of all Sultanate ruling houses, excluding that of the Khaljis. There was nothing to distinguish it, its only significance being that it marked an advanced stage in the disintegration of the Sultanate.

Khizr Khan's reign, as well as that of his successors, Mubarak Shah (1421-34), Muhammad Shah (1434-45) and Alauddin Alam Shah (1445-50), was spent trying to control

rebellious regions like Kateher, Badaun, Etawah, Patiali, Gwalior, Bayana, Kampil, Chandawar, Nagaur and Mewat, as also the Sharqi Sultans of Jaunpur, who coveted the throne of Delhi. All Sayyid rulers had to face stiff resistance from the Khokhars led by the valourous Jasrath.

### **The Lodis (1451 - 1526)**

The Lodis were the last ruling family of the Sultanate period and the first to be headed by the Afghans. The three rulers of this dynasty, Bahlul, Sikandar, and Ibrahim, proved unable to restore the glory of the state. They faced continuous threats from various Rajput clans like the Bachgoti and Bhadauria, as well as from the Sharqis of Jaunpur and perpetually rebellious tracts like Gwalior.

The principal event of Bahlul Lodi's reign was the eventual annexation of the Jaunpur kingdom. More memorable was the rule of his successor, Sikandar, a contemporary of both Mahmud Begarha of Gujarat and Rana Sangha of Mewar.

Sikandar made a strenuous bid to enhance his position vis-à-vis the Afghan nobles, in contravention of his native traditions. Afghan polity, composed as it was of various tribes, was strongly egalitarian in nature. All Afghan chiefs viewed themselves as co-equals of the Afghan Sultan, whose status was merely that of first among equals.

Besides trying to reverse this tradition, Sikandar simultaneously attempted to revitalise the



administrative apparatus. He devoted some attention to controlling the prices of commodities. The rent rolls prepared during his reign formed the basis of those readied under Sher Shah Sur (also known as Sher Shah Suri). He selected the site for the city of Agra. Sikandar imposed the *jaziya* and indulged in destruction of temples.

The Lodis are remembered for the Bahluli coin which continued in circulation till Akbar's rule, and the standard of measurement called the *gazz-i Sikandari* which remained in force till Mughal times.

The last ruler of this dynasty was slain in the battle of Panipat. The *Tarikh-i Khan-i-Jahani* noted that he was the only Sultan of India to have been killed on the battlefield.

Summing up the end of the Sultanate, a scholar states, "the Sultanate of Delhi, which had its birth on the battlefield of Tarain in 1192, breathed its last in 1526, a few miles away on the battlefield of Panipat."

### **Disintegration of the Sultanate**

The disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate had begun during the last phase of Tughlaq rule. Timur's invasion accelerated the process. As a result, a number of provincial governors and autonomous principalities began to assert their independence. Bengal, Sind, Multan, and the Deccan states were among the first to break free of Delhi. The governors of Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur followed suit. The states of Rajasthan retained their independent stature, as did Orissa,

while Kashmir continued as a Hindu state till the mid-fourteenth century.

In the west, Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar wrestled for primacy, while in the east, Bengal found itself hemmed in by the Sharqis of Jaunpur and the Gajapatis of Orissa. The rulers of Delhi, in turn, contested with Jaunpur for control of the Ganga-Yamuna region. The final absorption of that kingdom by the Lodis triggered off a bitter contest with Gujarat and Mewar over the disintegrating state of Malwa.

### **The Eastern Regions**

#### **Bengal, Kamarupa, Orissa**

In the time of the Tughlaqs, the Bengal governor, Shamsuddin Ilyas Khan, taking advantage of the distance from Delhi and the preoccupations of the central rulers, asserted his independence. Two expeditions by Sultan Firuz Tughlaq failed to reassert the effective suzerainty of Delhi, where after Bengal enjoyed almost two centuries of uninterrupted independent existence. Several dynasties ruled Bengal during these times.

The rulers of the Ilyas Khan family were prolific builders and adorned their capitals, Pandua and Gaur, with beautiful buildings in stone and brick, which bore the impress of the architectural style of the region. Prominent Bengali writers of the times included Maladhar Basu, compiler of *Sri Krishna Vijaya* and his son, who was given the title of Satyaraja Khan.

The reign of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519) was notable for the number of Hindus who occupied high



offices, including those of the wazir and the controller of the mint. The famous Vaishnava brothers, Rupa and Sanatan, were among the recipients of state employment.

During these years Bengal achieved some success in its endeavours to extend its sway in the Brahmaputra valley. The two principal kingdoms in the area were those of Kamta (Kamarupa) in the west and that of the Ahoms in the east. In the fifteenth century, the Khens established their rule over Kamarupa. The initial attacks of the Bengal rulers on Kamta yielded mixed results and it was only in the time of Alauddin Hussain Shah that the kingdom was annexed to Bengal. The Sultan nominated his son as governor of the newly conquered territory and also settled a body of Afghans in the area with a view to effecting its pacification.

Some time later, Vishasinha of the Koch tribe emerged as the ruler of Kamarupa. In the reign of Nara Narayan, a subsequent ruler of the tribe, the kingdom was divided into two parts known as Kuch Bihar and Koch Hajo.

The Ahoms, who belonged to the Shan tribe, had established their hold on Assam by the beginning of the thirteenth century. The reigning Ahom king, Suhungmung, was the most outstanding ruler of the dynasty. On adopting Hindu customs and ways, he changed his name to Svarga Narayana. Vaishnavism made great strides in the region due to the efforts of Sankaradeva, the great reformer. An attack by the son

of Alauddin Hussain was repulsed by the Ahom ruler, who was also able to extend his kingdom. The Ahoms conquered Kamarupa and retained their hold over it and Assam throughout the period of the Delhi Sultanate.

Bengal faced formidable neighbours on the Orissa front as well. The kings of the Ganga dynasty had raided Radha (south Bengal) and Lakhnauti even in Sultanate times. Under the Gajapatis, large parts of the Midnapore and Hughli districts were incorporated into Orissa. The rulers of Orissa further tried to extend their sway upto the Bhagirathi, but were repulsed by the Bengal sultans. The sultans led retaliatory raids into Orissa but failed to destabilise the rulers.

### **Western India Gujarat**

Though Gujarat had for all practical purposes assumed independence soon after Timur's invasion, it was only in 1407 that Zafar Khan (son of a Rajput convert to Islam) formally proclaimed himself ruler with the title of Muzaffar Shah. The kingdom of Gujarat soon became entangled in a long-standing rivalry with Malwa. Its ruler, Hushang Shah, was even imprisoned by Muzaffar Shah, but was reinstated due to the difficulties in subduing the region. Malwa smarted under the humiliation and sought to extract revenge, which involved both kingdoms in a mutually destructive spiral.

Muzaffar Shah's grandson, Ahmad Shah I (1411-43), considerably expanded the kingdom, reorganised the



administration and founded the new capital city of Ahmedabad on the site of the old town of Asawal. He also commissioned the construction of a number of mosques, madarsas, and palaces, which bear the impress of the regional tradition. Ahmad Shah contested with a number of Rajput states in the Saurashtra region as well as on the Gujarat-Rajasthan border. He was successful in wresting the fort of Girnar (in Saurashtra), but restored its ruler on the promise of indemnity. He also subjugated the Rajput states of Jhalawar and Dungarpur.

Ahmad Shah devastated the famous Hindu pilgrimage centre of Sidhpur and destroyed several of its beautiful temples. He was the first Sultan to levy *jaziya* on the Hindus of Gujarat.

Gujarat's most famous Sultan was Mahmud Begarha (1459-1511), so called because he had subdued two formidable forts (garhs), Girnar in Saurashtra and Champaner in south Gujarat. Mahmud Begarha effected the final annexation of the rich and prosperous region of Saurashtra into his realm. His victory at Girnar has been attributed to treason by the defending raja's minister. The heavily outnumbered raja fought valiantly, but to no avail. After the fall of the fort, he converted to Islam and joined the Sultan's service. The sultan founded the town of Mustafabad near the fort.

Mahmud Begarha also attacked Jagat (Dwarka) on the pretext that some of its inhabitants were harassing

pilgrims to Mecca. He destroyed several temples in the region. The fort of Champaner too, was valiantly defended by its raja and his men, who fought to the last man while the women committed *jauhar*. Mahmud Begarha built a new township, Muhammadabad in the vicinity. Mahmud Begarha's efforts in conjunction with those of the ruler of Egypt to put a break on the activities of the Portuguese were, however, unsuccessful. The last great ruler of Gujarat was his grandson, Bahadur Shah, who annexed Malwa, attacked Chittor and fought the Mughal emperor, Humayun. He was killed by the Portuguese.

#### Malwa

The centrally located region of Malwa, which controlled both the trade routes between Gujarat and north India, as also between the north and south, threw off the yoke of Delhi in the wake of Timur's invasion. In the fifteenth century, the capital of the state had shifted from Dhar to Mandu, where many buildings decorated with glazed tiles were erected.

Among the early Sultans of Malwa was Hushang Shah, a ruler recognised for his general policy of tolerance and his encouragement to Rajputs to settle in his domain. But the most powerful of Malwa Sultans was Mahmud Khalji, who ruled in the mid-fifteenth century. He was a vigorous warrior and fought almost all his neighbouring kingdoms, though his primary areas of concern were southern Rajputana and Mewar.



He is associated with the destruction of several temples.

### **Mewar**

The fifteenth century was also notable for the rise of Mewar as a premier state of Rajputana. The kingdom of Mewar, dating back to at least the eighth century A.D., was a centre of resistance throughout the Sultanate period. It again emerged as an important factor in north Indian politics under Rana Kumbha. The Rana's reign witnessed ceaseless conflict with Malwa and Gujarat, and it is to his credit that he was able to withstand the assaults of such powerful states. Kumbhalgarh was besieged several times by Gujarat while Mahmud Khalji advanced as far as Ajmer. The Rana repulsed these attacks and retained hold over most of his conquests.

Besides being a skilled warrior, Rana Kumbha was a patron of learning and himself authored a number of books. He also built the famous Victory Tower at Chittor, besides reservoirs and temples. His grandson was the renowned Rana Sangha, who has been described as "the fragment of a soldier," his body bearing the scars of over eighty wounds. He fought successfully against Malwa, Gujarat and Delhi.

The most important development in the years between the death of Rana Kumbha and the rise of Rana Sangha was the decline of Malwa. Its problems were accentuated due to the differences between a later ruler, Mahmud II, and the powerful Rajput leader of eastern Malwa, Medini Rai. While the Malwa

ruler turned to Gujarat for succour, Medini Rai appealed to Rana Sangha. The Rana defeated Mahmud II and took him prisoner to Chittor, though he subsequently released him. Hostilities between the two kingdoms, however, continued under Rana Sangha's successor. Eventually, the kingdom of Malwa was annexed by Gujarat.

The growing power of Mewar alarmed the Lodi ruler, Ibrahim, who invaded the kingdom, but was repulsed. Around this time also began Babur's forays into India.

### **Marwar**

Marwar, another important state of Rajasthan, was ruled by the Rathors, said to be descendants of the Rashtrakutas. Its modern history begins with Chunda, who ascended the throne towards the end of the fourteenth century. His successor, Jodha, built the fort of Jodhpur and also established a town there, which soon became the state capital. One of his sons, Bika, founded the state of Bikaner in the mid-fifteenth century. Marwar's most important ruler during this period was Maldeo, who came into conflict with Sher Shah.

### **Amber**

Amber was ruled by the Kachhwaha Rajputs, who claim descent from Kush, the second son of Lord Ramachandra. Some modern scholars have traced their origins to the Kachhapaghatas of Gwalior, whose ancestors had migrated from eastern India. According to James Todd, the state was founded some time in the tenth century A.D. In its early



years, it appears to have accepted the suzerainty of Mewar, though it began to gain political importance from the fourteenth century. Like other Rajput rulers, the raja of Amber, Prithviraj, who ascended the throne in A.D. 1502, fought under Rana Sangha at Khanua.

#### North-west and North India

##### Jaunpur

The Sharqis with their capital at Jaunpur (eastern UP) commenced their career as officers of the Delhi Sultanate. The founder of the dynasty, Malik Sarwar, had served as wazir under Firuz Tughlaq and was subsequently posted in the eastern region with the title, Malik-us-Sharq (lord of the east). His successors were called Sharqis after the title. Sharqi rule lasted for less than a century and was marked by futile wars with Delhi, which depleted its resources. The kingdom was eventually annexed by Bahlul Lodi.

The greatest ruler of the dynasty was Ibrahim, under whom Jaunpur became an important centre of learning, earning the sobriquet "Shiraz of India."

The Sharqis were enthusiastic builders and embellished their capital with a distinct style of architecture characterised by lofty gates and giant arches. The most famous of their buildings was the Atala Masjid. Malik Muhammad Jaisi lived in their kingdom.

##### Kashmir

Kashmir's first Muslim ruler was Shamsuddin Shah, an adventurer from Swat, who had taken service under the last Hindu ruler of the state. After the latter's death, he seized the throne in 1339. His grandson, Sikandar, though a patron of Islamic learning, was a bigot who severely persecuted his Hindu subjects and either converted or drove away most Brahmins from the state.

Kashmir's greatest Sultan was Zainul Abidin. A liberal and enlightened ruler he introduced a number of conciliatory measures, and allowed the Kashmiri Pandits to return to the state. Wherever possible, temples were restored, the *jaziya* abolished and cow slaughter prohibited. Zainul Abidin was himself a man of learning, versed in Persian, Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Tibetan. He was a patron of arts, and encouraged the specialised crafts of the Valley. He ordered the translation of the *Mahabharata* and the *Rajatarangini* into Persian, and also several Arabic and Persian works into Hindi. He undertook a number of measures for the economic well-being of his subjects, reducing taxes, regulating the prices of commodities, establishing control over markets and reforming the currency.

In the mid-sixteenth century, one of Babur's relatives conquered Kashmir. He was, however, driven out, after which the Chakk tribe gained ascendancy. Kashmir was eventually annexed by Akbar.



## Exercises

1. Briefly describe the devastation of Delhi by Timur's army.
2. Give a brief account of Bengal's attempts to extend its sway in eastern India.
3. Briefly describe the rise of Mewar in the fifteenth century.
4. Write short notes on:
  - a) Sikandar Lodi
  - b) Ahmad Shah
  - c) Mahmud Begarha
  - d) Mahmud Khalji
  - e) Zainul Abidin

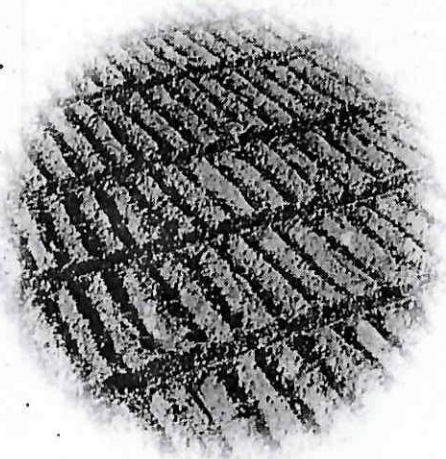


# 11 CHAPTER

## ECONOMY IN SULTANATE TIMES







THE Sultanate period lacks a stellar document comparable to Abul Fazl's compendium, the *Ain-i Akbari*, which provides a wealth of information on the economy of the Mughal empire. Nonetheless, on the basis of the accounts of contemporary chroniclers, scholars have pieced together a picture of the state of the economy during these times.

### Agricultural Production

Cultivation was based on individual peasant farming, with wells, the principal source of artificial irrigation, though there are references to some canals too. The largest number of canals were constructed on the orders of Firuz Tughlaq. He had two canals cut from the Yamuna, one from the Sutlej and one from the Ghaggar, in addition to numerous smaller ones.

Water from wells and canals was raised by linking the ancient *araghatta* with pin-drum-gearing so that it could be worked by animal power. This enlarged irrigation in the Indus basin.

Crops dependent on artificial irrigation, like wheat and sugarcane, were more valued than those raised on rain water.

Sericulture, the breeding of the mulberry silkworm for producing true silk, reached India from China through a circuitous route in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. *Tussar* and *muga* silk, however, were produced in India from earlier times. Mango was particularly valued among fruits; grapes were cultivated in only a few areas, though, on Firuz Tughlaq's instructions, 1,200 orchards were laid out in the neighbourhood of Delhi and seven varieties of grapes grown.

### Rural Classes

The abundance of land in medieval India ensured that the struggle was not over land ownership, but over the harvest. The peasant was assured an inalienable right to land as long as he tilled it and paid his share of the state revenue demand. The highest category of peasants were the *khots* and *muqaddams* (headmen), who assisted the authorities in the collection of land revenue. In return, they were entitled to some concessions, including exemption from certain taxes. Alauddin Khalji's policies severely curtailed the power of this class.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq reduced the pressure on the *khots* and *muqaddams* by exempting them from paying taxes on their lands and cattle, as he realised they were indispensable for revenue collection. "It cannot be denied," he is reported to have said, "that abundant responsibility rests on the shoulders of



chiefs and headmen." At the same time, however, he insisted that, "the chief or headman be kept in such a condition that he may not become oblivious (of the authority of the government) and rebellious and refractory from excessive affluence."

Above the *khots* and *muqaddams* were the defeated Hindu chiefs (*rais* and *ranas*) as well as some village headmen. According to historians, in the mid-fourteenth century the *chaudhuri* appears as the highest rural personage responsible for land revenue to the state. By then, they say, the rural population fell into two broad categories – the peasants and the *zamindars*. The word *zamindar* now encompassed the entire rural class associated with revenue collection. But peasants and *zamindars* in the Sultanate period did not readily consent to pay revenue and are described in mediæval sources as "subjects only in appearance" who "pay revenue only when faced by terror of the army and blows of the dagger."

#### Agrarian Taxation

Land taxation proper, which began to be collected in an organised manner from the time of Alauddin Khalji, has been described by modern historians as "very heavy and regressive."

Barani states that Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq levied *kharaj* on the basis of actual produce and not on the basis of estimated yields. Muhammad bin Tughlaq resorted to even more stringent measures than Alauddin Khalji. To begin with, the oppressive taxation

system, hitherto confined to the Doab, was extended to other territories, including Gujarat, Malwa, the Deccan, and Bengal. Secondly, the rate of taxation was greatly enhanced. Whether the Sultan imposed additional taxes or recalculated existing ones in a manner detrimental to the peasantry, it is indisputable that the extraordinarily harsh exactions provoked widespread peasant revolts.

Firuz Tughlaq abolished the *ghari* and *charai* and limited the total taxes above the *kharaj* to four percent. Historians say it is possible that the exemptions were accompanied by the levy of *jaziya* as a separate tax, in addition to the land revenue. Hitherto, *jaziya* was levied as part of the land tax, which was known as *kharaj-jaziya*. The land tax remained unchanged under the Lodis, but was now collected in kind instead of in cash.

#### Iqtas

Some historians have described the rule of the Delhi Sultans as characterised by a systematisation of agrarian exploitation and an enormous concentration of the revenues obtained. The Sultanate bureaucracy, they say, was the principal exploiting class in society, appropriating almost the whole of the peasants' surplus.

The revenue resources were distributed among the Sultan and his nobles. Territories whose revenues went directly to the Sultan's treasury were called *khalisa*, while those parcelled out among his nobles were called *iqtas*.



Historians have identified three stages in the history of the *iqta* in the Sultanate period. In the first phase, the Sultans assigned different regions as *iqtas* to their commanders, who had to maintain themselves and their troops from its revenues. At this point, the *iqtadars* (holders of *iqtas*) also served as governors and were responsible for both revenue collection and the administration of the *iqtas*. However, the *iqtas* were subject to transfer from one person to another.

In the second phase, under the Khaljis and Tughlaqs, an attempt was made to check the freedom the *iqtadars* had hitherto enjoyed in revenue matters. They were now required to submit accounts of the revenues collected as well as their own expenses, and remit the balance to the imperial treasury.

In the third and final stage under Firuz Tughlaq, the centralising tendencies of the second phase were reversed and several concessions made to the *iqtadars*. *Iqtas* also in all probability became hereditary. Firuz Shah's measures continued under the Lodis.

Besides *iqtas*, the Sultans earmarked a portion of their revenues for Muslim theologians, scholars and men of learning. These tax-free grants of land were called *inam* or *madad-i-maash*, grants to Muslim religious establishments being known as *waqf*. A portion of these grants was in the form of wastelands which the grantees were required to bring under cultivation. Under Firuz Shah, it has

been estimated that revenues relinquished in this manner amounted to more than five per cent of the government share. The grants were generally hereditary, but could be resumed anytime by the Sultan.

#### Non-Agricultural Production

Though comprehensive information on the economic resources of the Sultanate is not available, a rough idea of non-agricultural production can be culled from contemporary accounts.

Salt was produced in sizeable quantities in the Sambhar lake. Iron ore of very high grade was mined and used to produce damascened steel, which enjoyed world renown. Indian metallurgy in fact, was highly rated, with the Deccan leading in the export of iron and steel to the Middle East. Copper was mined in Rajasthan, gold and silver excavated on a small scale, while diamonds were obtained from the Deccan and Gondwana.

The largest indigenous industry was that of textiles. The spinning wheel had considerably increased the efficiency of the spinners, while the cotton-carders' bow cleaned far greater quantities of cotton. The result was a dramatic increase in spun yarn, which became much cheaper than before. Various types of cotton textiles were manufactured, ranging from coarse cloth to fine varieties of muslin in Sylhet and Devagiri. Gujarat was a major textile-producing region, and was reputed for its silk-weaving, while Kashmir was famous for its shawls.



The building industry was a major source of urban employment. The conquerors were prolific builders and constructed innumerable forts, palaces, mosques and other public buildings, and employed thousands of workmen. Paper manufacture began in India around this time.

### Commerce

The first half of the fourteenth century was characterised by a marked expansion of the money economy. The peasants entered the money market as they were obliged to pay the land revenue in cash. The large number of cities must also have stimulated commercial activity.

A substantial portion of the produce of the countryside made its way to the urban centres in order to sustain the towns. Merchants called *caravanis* were involved in transporting grain to the cities to feed the populace.

Horses were a major item of import, while slaves were exported in large numbers. Indigo was also in demand overseas. Multan was an important centre of trade, from where most imported merchandise reached Delhi. The capital received goods from various parts of the sub-continent; foodgrains from Amroha, wines from Aligarh, betel leaves from Dhar, muslin from Devagiri and striped cloth from Bengal, for example. The inland trade was handled by merchants, many of them from Multan and known as *Multanis*.

### Slavery

A discussion on the economy of the Sultanate period would be incomplete

without reference to the institution of slavery. The statistics involved are simply astounding.

Qutbuddin Aibak obtained twenty thousand slaves during his invasion of Gujarat, and another fifty thousand in the course of the attack on Kalinjar. Balban is said to have secured "countless horses and slaves" following his raid on Ranthambor. Alauddin Khalji possessed fifty thousand slaves; under Firuz Shah the figure rose to an all-time high of one lakh eighty thousand slaves. The nobles also maintained large retinues of slaves. Though some slaves rose to high rank in the Sultanate polity, most served as domestic help.

Slaves were openly sold as chattel. Alauddin's market regulations included prices of various types of slaves, which were comparable to those of inferior horses and milch cows.

When Timur invaded India, his soldiers and camp followers captured one hundred thousand natives. However they were all slaughtered on the eve of the attack on Delhi in the apprehension that they might revolt and thereby endanger the operation. After Delhi was occupied, its residents were distributed as slaves among Timur's nobles to compensate them for their previous loss. Those enslaved included several thousand artisans and skilled personnel.

### Currency

The Sultans established a tri-metallic coinage in gold, silver and copper. Sultanate coinage has been described



as representing a "dethesaurisation," or release into monetary circulation of treasure obtained from Hindu kingdoms and temples. Ferishta states that in his raid on Devagiri, prior to becoming Sultan, Alauddin Khalji obtained 7.7 metric tonnes of gold and 12.8 metric tonnes of silver. Barani says that Malik Kafur's plundering expedition to Mabar yielded about 241 metric tonnes of gold, which could be an exaggeration.

The huge quantities of gold acquired affected the gold-silver ratio, and the loss of Bengal accentuated the

shortage of silver. By the mid-fourteenth century, the monetary system established by the Sultans was in decay, and the relatively pure silver *tanka* was replaced by a debased one. In the fifteenth century, the Sultanate switched to mixed-metal currencies of copper with minimum use of silver.

The various denominations of currency prevalent were *tankas*, *jitals*, *dangs* and *dirams*. Gold came to India from the goldmines of West Africa via Egypt and Syria, though a considerable amount was used to pay for the horses imported from the Middle East.

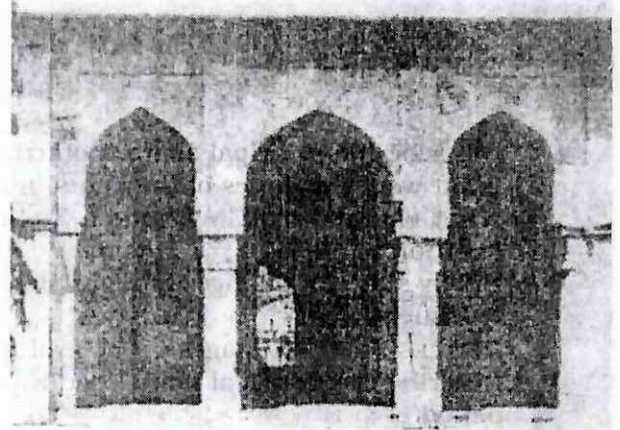
### Exercises

1. Describe the principal sources of irrigation in the Sultanate period.
2. What were the duties of the khots, muqaddams and chaudhuris?
3. What changes did Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq introduce in the system of agrarian taxation?
4. Briefly state the changes brought about by Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the land revenue system.
5. Discuss the three stages in the evolution of the *iqta* system.
6. Describe the principal non-agricultural produce of India during the Sultanate period.
7. What was the importance of the institution of slavery for the Sultanate economy?
8. Describe the currency system prevalent in the Sultanate.

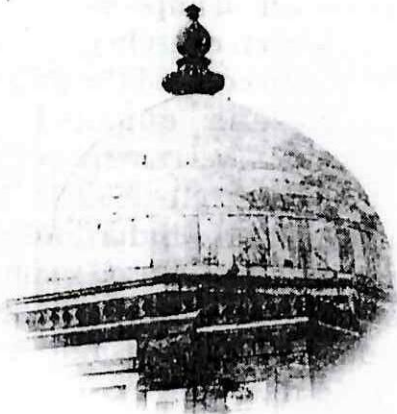


# 12 CHAPTER

## CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS TRENDS







With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, Islamic cultural forms arrived in the sub-continent on a significant scale. The realm of architecture became the arena in which the aesthetic heritage of the new rulers became immediately manifest. Muslim architecture included religious and secular structures. Mosques and tombs comprised the first category, and buildings for public and civic use such as pavilions, town gates and palace-forts formed the second. While India's indigenous architecture is *trabeate*, that is to say, that space is spanned by means of beams laid horizontally, the Islamic form is *arcuate*, whereby arches are used to bridge a space. The dome is a prominent feature of the mosque in contrast to the *shikhar* (spire) of Hindu temples.

### Sultanate Architecture

Mosques have been described as representing the keynote of the Islamic style. The basic design of a mosque is fairly simple, with an open courtyard

surrounded on four sides by pillared cloisters and a tank in the centre for ablutions before *namaz*. On the western side facing Mecca is a hall containing the *mihrab* and indicating the direction of prayer. To its right is the pulpit from which the *imam* delivers sermons. The mosque also has a minaret from which the call to prayer is made. The mosque in which Muslims assemble for the Friday (*jumma*) collective prayers is called the *jami masjid*.

The tomb was another new edifice introduced into the sub-continent by Islam. Muslim mausolea were imposing structures located within huge gardens and approached by elaborate gateways. The tombs of important religious divines were called *dargahs*, a Persian word meaning a court or palace.

Scholars have noted three distinct stages in the evolution of Islamic architecture in India. The initial phase, characterised by destruction, has been described by a contemporary chronicler Hasan Nizami, "It was the custom after the conquest of every fort and stronghold to ground its foundations and pillars to powder under the feet of fierce and gigantic elephants."

In the second phase, the buildings were dismantled to provide ready-made material for new structures. Elephants were used to displace the beams and pillars and carry them to new sites. Northern India was almost entirely denuded of Hindu architecture as a result of this policy. Commenting on this process of construction,



Hasan Nizami, remarked "the stones were dug out from the hills, and the temples of the infidels were demolished to furnish a supply."

In the third phase, Islamic structures were built of specially prepared stone (called dressed stone).

### Early Structures

The earliest surviving Islamic monuments in India are located at Banbhore near Thatta in Sind. This site, dated sometime after the birth of Islam, is possibly the first Arab settlement in South Asia.

It is, however, only from the thirteenth century that Islamic architecture in India can properly be dated. Qutbuddin Aibak occupied the Rajput stronghold of Qila-i-Rai Pithora and converted it into his capital. He desired a *jami* mosque to herald the new era and ordered that the large temple in the centre of the citadel be dismantled. Its plinth (*chabbutra*) was enlarged and a mosque built over it. The Quwwat al-Islam mosque was constructed from the material of twenty-seven nearby Hindu and Jain temples. The famous Iron Pillar, uprooted from Mathura where it had stood for more than six hundred years, was placed in front of the mosque without its crowning figure of Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu.

Since the Quwwat al-Islam mosque bore the powerful impress of its Hindu origins, a screen of arches was erected in front of it to conceal the pillars. The Hindu masons engaged in its construction, however, were not familiar with the true arch used in Islamic buildings outside India and used a rudimentary technique as a substitute. Aibak also had a mosque at Ajmer, the Adhai-din-ka-Jhompra, raised on the same pattern. Aibak's most spectacular



Delhi, Quwwat-al-Islam Mosque



construction was the adjoining Qutb Minar, intended to proclaim the authority of Islam.

In Iltutmish's time, the tomb of his son, Sultan Ghari, was built as an underground chamber, an unusual design perhaps dictated by the

prevailing political disorder. Iltutmish's own tomb was a modest structure but elaborately decorated inside, with extracts from the Quran. Its dome was constructed by a method known as the *squinch*.

The only architecturally significant building of Balban's time was his own tomb, located near the Qutb complex, where the true arch was used for the first time in India.

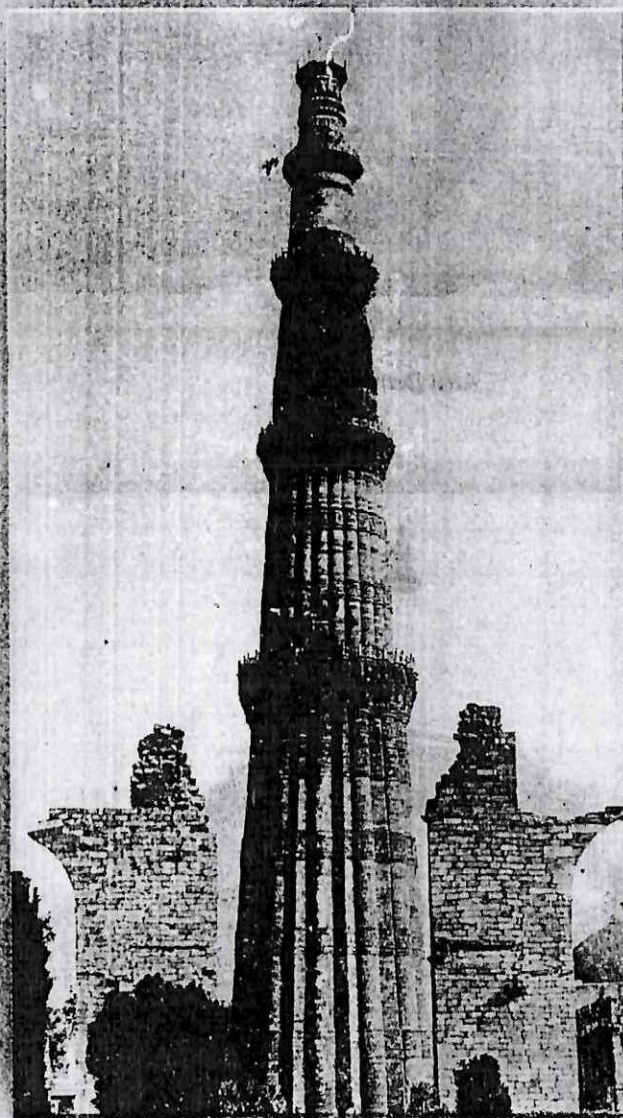
### Architecture Under the Khaljis and Tughlaqs

Only a small portion of Alauddin Khalji's ambitious architectural plans materialised. These included the Alai Darwaza, the southern gateway of his intended grand mosque. Its refined appearance has been attributed to the influx of Muslim artisans and craftsmen to India following the collapse of the Seljuk Empire.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq is credited with the foundation of the third city of Delhi, known as Tughlaqabad. Its most well-known feature is the rulers' mausoleum which resembles a mini-fortress, probably indicative of the insecurity of the ruling family. The tomb is made of red sandstone and topped by a white marble dome, and its most pronounced feature is its sloping outer walls.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq built the fourth city of Delhi. He had the space between the first and second capitals enclosed by thick walls, the parts thus joined being called Jahanpanah.

Firuz Shah Tughlaq's buildings have a rough and ready appearance,



*Qutb Minar*

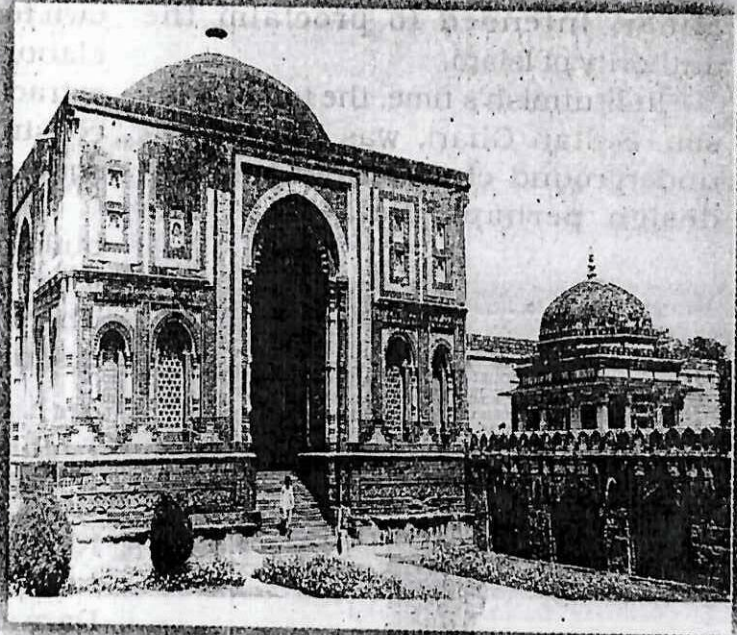


probably due to scarcity of skilled workmen following the transfer of capital by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and shortage of funds. The important buildings of Firuz's reign include four fortress-cities and the fifth city of Delhi which contained the Hall of Public Audience as well as the *Jami Masjid*. An Ashokan pillar which Firuz Shah had uprooted from its original site near Ambala was also planted here.

The Kali Masjid, the Begumpuri mosque, the Khirki Masjid and the Kalan Masjid are some of the mosques constructed during this period. Important tombs include those of the Sultan himself and his prime minister.

### Later Monuments

The only works commissioned by the Sayyid and Lodi rulers were tombs (*maqbaras*). Over a hundred have been found in the neighbourhood of Delhi alone. The tombs were of two types, octagonal and square. The former belonged to the royalty and the latter to the nobles. All the Lodi rulers were buried in the Bagh-i-Jud, known today as Lodi Garden. Located here also is a small mosque known as the

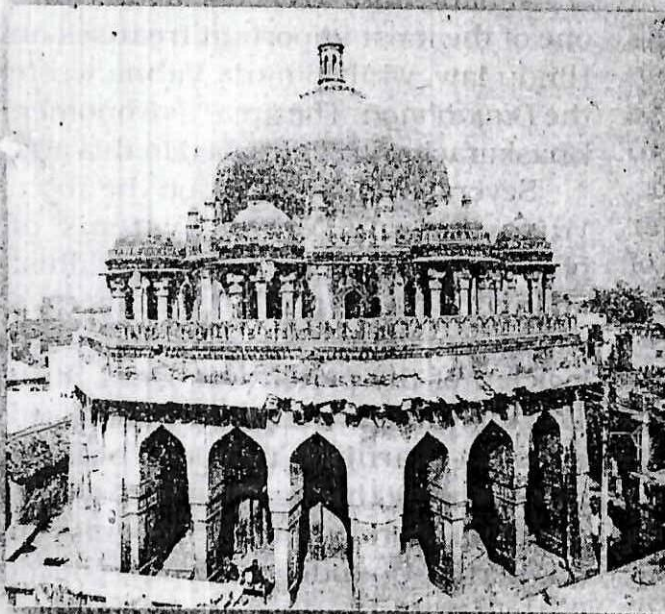


*Alai Darwaza*

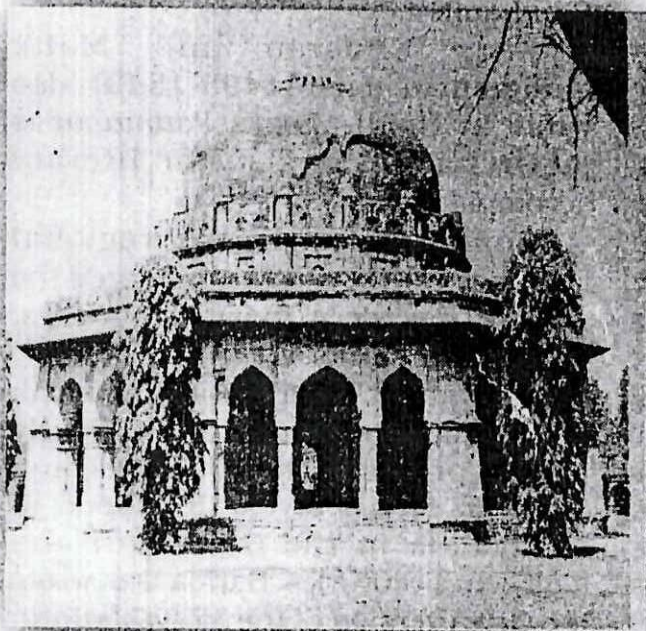


*Tughlaqabad*





Mubarak Sayyid's Tomb, Delhi



Sikandar Lodi's Tomb, Delhi

Bara Gumbad, constructed on the orders of Sikandar Lodi.

The rulers of the provincial dynasties that arose on the decline of the Sultanate were also builders of palaces, mosques and tombs. Though the essential features of their architecture resembled that of Delhi, it was influenced by the artistic traditions of the regions in which it flourished.

### Language and Literature Persian Literature

Though constantly preoccupied with military activities, the Sultanate rulers patronised Islamic learning and arts. A number of historical accounts produced during this period are our principal source of information on the era. Among them may be mentioned Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir*, Minhaj Siraj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* and the *Fatwah-i-Jahandari*, Afif's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi*, Isami's *Futuh-us-Salatin* and the *Tariq-i-Mubarak Shahi* by Yahya Sirhindi.

Some Sanskrit works were translated into Persian in this period, notable among them being the fifty-two short stories, titled the *Tuti Nama* (Book of the Parrot), by Zia Nakhshabi in A.D. 1330. Firuz Tughlaq ordered the translation of medical theses from Sanskrit.



Also translated was a compendium on astronomy and astrology, as well as compilations on music and wrestling. There was, however, no attempt to translate Persian literature into Sanskrit or any vernacular language.

Sultan Zainul Abidin of Kashmir (1420-1470) ordered the translation of the *Mahabharata* and *Rajatarangini* into Kashmiri, as well as several Sanskrit works on medicine and music. Among the prominent poets of the age were Amir Khusrau, Amir Hasan Diharvi and Malik Muhammad Jaisi.

Several Sufi works were also composed during the Sultanate period. The conversations and dialogues of several Sufi teachers were collected by their disciples and provide valuable information on these mystics.

#### **Sanskrit and Hindi Literature**

Several scholars have pointed out that during these times, Sanskrit literature remained the vehicle of Hindu religious and intellectual consciousness and almost wholly ignored the Islamic presence. It flourished specially in Rajasthan, and the states of southern India and Orissa. Among the religious works produced in this period were commentaries on the *Puranas* and *Dharmasastras* as well as philosophical treatises. Ramanuja wrote his commentaries on the *Brahmasutra*, Parthasarathi on the *Karma Mimansa*, while Jayadeva composed his famous *Gita Govinda*. Notable dramatists include Jayadeva, Jai Singh Suri, Ravi Varman, Vidyanath, Varman Bhatta Bana, Gangadhar and Rupa Goswami.

Vijnanesvara wrote the *Mitakshara*, one of the most important treatises on Hindu law, while Jimuta Vahna wrote the *Dayabhaga*. The great astronomer, Bhaskaracharya, flourished in this age.

Several commentaries on the *Yoga*, *Vaisesika* and *Nyaya* systems of philosophy were composed. Buddhist and Jain writers produced numerous works on logic. The greatest Jain logician of the period was Deva Suri. The Vijayanagar kingdom patronised Sanskrit learning, its most notable scholar being the great Sayana.

Hindi literature made progress in this period. Chandbardai, court poet of Prithviraj and author of the famous *Prithviraj Raso*, was among the earliest writers in the language. Sarangdhar composed two great poems on the indomitable Hamira Deva of Ranthambor.

Amir Khusrau and Malik Muhammad Jaisi (1493-1542) also wrote in Hindi. Jaisi's *Padmavat* is justly hailed as a major literary accomplishment.

Compositions in the regional languages and dialects stimulated the growth of modern Indian languages. The bhakti saints such as Tulsidas, Surdas, Nanak, Kabir, Basava, Nanniah and Tikkana contributed tremendously to this process. The *Champus* and *Sandesa Kavya* styles developed in Malayalam in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Sarala Das wrote the Oriya version of the *Mahabharata*.

Assamese poetry reached its apogee under Sankaradeva who translated portions of the *Ramayana* and the



*Bhagvata Purana*. The first Bengali work of note was *Charyyapadas*, attributed to the tenth century, and subsequently a rich religious literature developed in the region. Special mention may be made of the *Mangal Kavyas*. The first Gujarati literary work was the *Bharata Bahuholi Rasa* by Salibhadra, composed around A.D. 1185.

### **Fine Arts**

A number of new musical instruments, such as the *rabab*, and new musical regulations, came to India with the Turks who, in turn, had inherited a rich musical tradition from the Arabs. In the reign of Firuz Shah Tughlaq, the Indian classical treatise, *Raag Darpan*, was translated into Persian. Several Sufis were adepts at music.

Among the regional patrons of music may be mentioned Sultan Hussain Sharqi of Jaunpur and Raja Man Singh of Gwalior. Music also developed in the state of Kashmir. According to available evidence, the *tabla* seems to have developed some time towards the end of the seventeenth century.

### **Cultural Encounter**

The Islamic advent in the sub-continent was a notable event. Long before the arrival of Islam as a political entity, foreign dynasties like the Indo-Greeks, Shakas, Indo-Parthians and Kushanas had ruled over significant parts of the sub-continent. However, there was a sharp contrast of ethos between the incursions of antiquity and those of medieval times.

The early foreigners appear to have lacked a clearly defined belief system and on arrival in India, readily embraced its spiritual ethos. In the second century B.C., the Greek ambassador Heliodorus erected the Besnagar column out of devotion to *Vaasudeva*. Rulers like Menander, Kadphises I and Kanishka became Buddhists, while others became devotees of Siva. The very first rock inscription in Sanskrit, the Junagadh rock inscription, was the handiwork of Rudradaman Shaka.

Islam, on the other hand, was a full-fledged system encompassing a faith, language, script, laws, customs, and even a theory of state. When Islam stepped out of Arabia and extended its writ over the Middle East, it brought about a revolution in the regions it entered. The languages, scripts, cultures and history of the pre-Islamic states were all replaced in favour of Islamic forms. The new identity became so pervasive that all traces of pre-Islamic civilisations were erased from public memory. The stately pyramids, wonders of the ancient world; for instance, ceased to evoke pride in the Egyptian converts who even forgot their Pharaohs.

In India, Islam faced an evolved native faith that resisted being supplanted in its ancestral land, thereby creating an impasse that evaded resolution through subsequent centuries. Some modern historians opine that the use of the terms "Hindus" and "Muslims" is inappropriate for this period as identity formation had not



crystallised sufficiently to warrant the use of such categories. However, it is undeniable that the invaders were deeply conscious of their distinctiveness from the local populace, as evidenced from the imposition of the *jaziya* tax. Foreign nobles also consistently spurned attempts by Indian Muslim converts to share political power. As a result, racial, sectarian and economic divisions rent the *ummah* throughout this period.

#### Links with the Caliph

Like Muslim rulers in other parts of the world, the Sultans of Delhi desired that the Caliph sanction their rule. The tradition of invoking Caliphal authority began with Mahmud Ghazni and continued under his successors. After the sack of Somnath, Mahmud Ghazni received several titles and honors from the Caliph. The name of the Abbasid Caliph appeared on his coins as well as those of his successors. Muhammad Ghur also received investitures from the Caliph.

Ilutmish's coins carried the name of the Caliph, along with a description of himself as the helper of the Caliph. Even after the last Caliph had been murdered and the Abbasid Caliphate ended with the sack of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols, the coins of the Delhi Sultans continued to bear his name. Nasiruddin Mahmud, Balban, Muizuddin Kaiqubad and Alauddin Khalji, among others, struck coins bearing the last Caliph's name.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq continued this tradition. His son Muhammad bin

Tughlaq regarded kings who ruled without the Caliph's authorisation as usurpers. Firuz Tughlaq shared these sentiments. "It is by his (caliph's) sanction," he said, "that the power of the kings is assured and no king is secure until he has submitted himself to the *khalifa*."

Regional Muslim rulers who broke away from the Delhi Sultanate also minted coins in the name of the Abbasid Caliph. Most of the Sayyid and Lodi rulers similarly viewed themselves as representatives of the Caliph in India.

#### Conversions

India did not experience the *en masse* conversions that Islam encountered in countries like Syria, Iran, Iraq and Egypt. Conversions in the Sultanate period were generally for mundane and worldly reasons, and were restricted to certain urban professional and vocational groups.

The so-called tyranny of the caste system has sometimes been held responsible for the conversions that took place. But there is no instance of any low caste group gaining an improved status after converting. The social position of a convert, Khondkar Fuzli Rubbee astutely observed, corresponded exactly to the station he held prior to his conversion. Foreign nobles were contemptuous of Hindu converts, whom they regarded as inferior, notwithstanding the common bonds of religion. This extreme racialism reached its pinnacle under Balban, though such sentiments persisted well into the seventeenth century.



The claim of Islamic equality versus caste tyranny was essentially a nineteenth century argument. During their rule, Muslims spoke only of the diverging religious perspectives of the two faiths, Islamic monotheism as opposed to Hindu polytheism, rather than their supposedly different social systems. It was only after the British arrived that the idea that Islam fosters social, as opposed to religious equality, was first floated.

Sufis played an important role in the conversion of the local populace. It is often assumed that Sufi proselytisation was entirely peaceful. "Warrior Sufis," however, are known to have actively participated in frontier warfare, both in India and elsewhere. They were reportedly active in the Deccan during the years 1296-1347. Bengal is similarly said to have been won not by Muslim cavalymen, but by the *bara auliyas*, the twelve legendary Muslim militant saints. The slave trade provided another opportunity to increase the flock of Islam as most slaves were converted.

Scholars note that Islam registered its greatest gains in western Punjab and eastern Bengal, both areas on the periphery of settled agriculture. When Islam arrived in the sub-continent, communities of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists that were making the transition to settled agriculture, took to the new faith in both regions.

The bhakti movement has often been presented as a Hindu response to the

egalitarian message of Islam and its spread among the lower classes. But this seems to be an inadequate assessment, as in the Hindu scheme bhakti (devotion) is an essential constituent of *sadhana* (religious pursuit). It was mentioned in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* as well as the *Bhagavata Gita*, where Lord Krishna said even the humblest devotee could reach him through simple devotion.

The bhakti movement started in the Tamil region around the sixth century A.D., spread through Karnataka and Maharashtra, and from around the fifteenth century, to north India and Bengal. Its chief feature was the emphasis on a loving relationship between the devotee and a personal god. Its popular poet-saints composed devotional hymns in the regional vernaculars and promised salvation to all classes. The leaders of the bhakti movement came from all strata of society.

The movement was developed by the twelve Alwar Vaishnavite and sixty-three Nayanar Saivite saints. The Saivite saint, Appar, is said to have converted the Pallava king, Mahendravarman, to Saivism. Other great saints were Sambandar and Manikkavasagar. The writings of these saints were collected in the *Tirumurai*, which has been called the Tamil Veda. The twelfth book in this collection, added later, is the *Periya Puranam*, composed by the poet Shekkilar in the reign of the Chola king, Kulottunga. The bhakti movement is often viewed as a response to Sankaracharya.



But Sankara himself is known to have authored several works of a profoundly devotional character. Among the outstanding leaders of the movement was Ramanuja, who is popularly regarded as the founder of Sri Vaishnavism. Madhav (1199-1278) was another great exponent of the bhakti movement in the south.

### The Varkari Path

The bhakti poet-saints were called *sants* and comprised two groups. The Vaishnava *sants* flourished in Maharashtra from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century and worshipped the god, Vithoba. The second group operated in the Hindi-speaking regions, Punjab and Rajasthan from the fifteenth century onwards, and believed in *nirguna* bhakti (worship of god who was beyond all qualifications).

The *sants* of the Vithoba cult and their followers constituted the Varkari, or pilgrim's path, so called because of their emphasis on the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur. There are at least fifty *sants* belonging to this school, over a span of five hundred years, the most important among them being Jnaneshvar (author of a commentary on the Gita, the *Jnaneshvari*, which is the basic text of this *panth*); Namdev (1270-1350); Eknath (1548-1600); Tukaram (1598-1649) and his contemporary, Ramdas, whose teachings inspired Shivaji. The bhakti tradition of Maharashtra is credited with forging the Marathas into a martial community that challenged the Mughals.

### Saguna Bhakti

In the north, the bhakti movement spread through Ramananda, regarded as in the direct line of descent from Ramanuja. Ramananda lived in Banaras in the fourteenth-fifteenth century and founded the Ramanandi sect, which worshipped Rama as the supreme deity. The early north Indian *sants* were disciples of Ramananda and include Sena, Pipa, Dhanna, Sadhna and Raidas.

Two schools emerged from Ramananda's teachings, the *saguna* which believed in the doctrine of incarnation, and the *nirguna* which worshipped the formless aspect of divinity. The *nirguna* school was best represented by Kabir, considered the spiritual preceptor of all subsequent north Indian *panths*.

The greatest exponents of the *saguna* school were Rama devotees like Tulsidas and Nabhadas, and Krishna devotees like Nimbarka, Vallabhacharya, Chaitanya, Surdas and Mirabai. Tulsidas (1532-1623) authored the celebrated *Ramacharita Manas*, which has been favourably compared to Valmiki's *Ramayana* in its influence on Hindu society. Tulsidas lived in Akbar's reign, but there is no record of his having received royal patronage.

Nimbarka and Vallabha were two south Indian brahmins who settled at Mathura, where they practised devotion to Krishna and Radha. Not much is known about Nimbarka, though according to available evidence Vallabha lived from 1479-1531 and



founded the Vallabhacharya sect devoted to Radha-Krishna worship.

Krishna devotion also swept Bengal, where its early exponents included Vidyapati Thakur and Chandidas. But Chaitanya (1485-1533), a contemporary of Vallabha, was undoubtedly the most renowned exponent of Krishna bhakti. He was born in Nabhadvipa to a brahmin family, and was himself worshipped as an incarnation of Krishna. After becoming a *sannyasi*, he left Bengal and spent two decades at Puri in Orissa, in worship of Lord Jagannath. He is believed to have converted a number of Muslims, including the chief minister and the chief *munshi* of Husain Shah of Gaur.

The Rajput princess, Mira Bai, great grand-daughter of the founder of Jodhpur and married into the Mewar royal family, was a fervent devotee of Krishna, whom she worshipped as Girdhar-Gopal. Other important bhakti saints like Narsinha Mehta in Gujarat and Surdas (1478-1583) in western Uttar Pradesh greatly contributed to the devotional literature of the times. Surdas' monumental work, *Sur Sagar*, deals with the life of Krishna.

Many popular sects arose in Saivism as well, the most prominent in north India being Kashmir Saivism, founded by Vasugupta in the early ninth century A.D. Kashmir Saivism is said to have also been influenced by Mahayana Buddhism. Its most well known exponent was Abhinavagupta, who lived in the eleventh century. Kashmir Saivism was, however, almost

wiped out from its birthplace with the Muslim conquest of Kashmir in the fourteenth century.

The Saiva-Siddhanta school and the Lingayat sect arose in south India. Saiva Siddhanta can be traced back to the Nayanars, though it attained its complete form only in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Lingayat movement was founded by Basava, a minister in the court of the Kalachuri king of Kalyani in the twelfth century. The Lingayats derive their name from the small *lingam* that all followers of this cult carry on their person.

Gorakhnath initiated a new movement within Saivism; his followers became known as Gorakhnath jogis. They are frequently mentioned in Sufi literature and were quite influential by the fifteenth century. Their centre was the Tila of Gorakhnath in the Siind Sagar Doab, though they had centres (*mathas*) in other places as well. The followers usually wore earrings and were also known as Kanphata (ear-torn) jogis. They kept a continuous fire and maintained a common kitchen for all inmates.

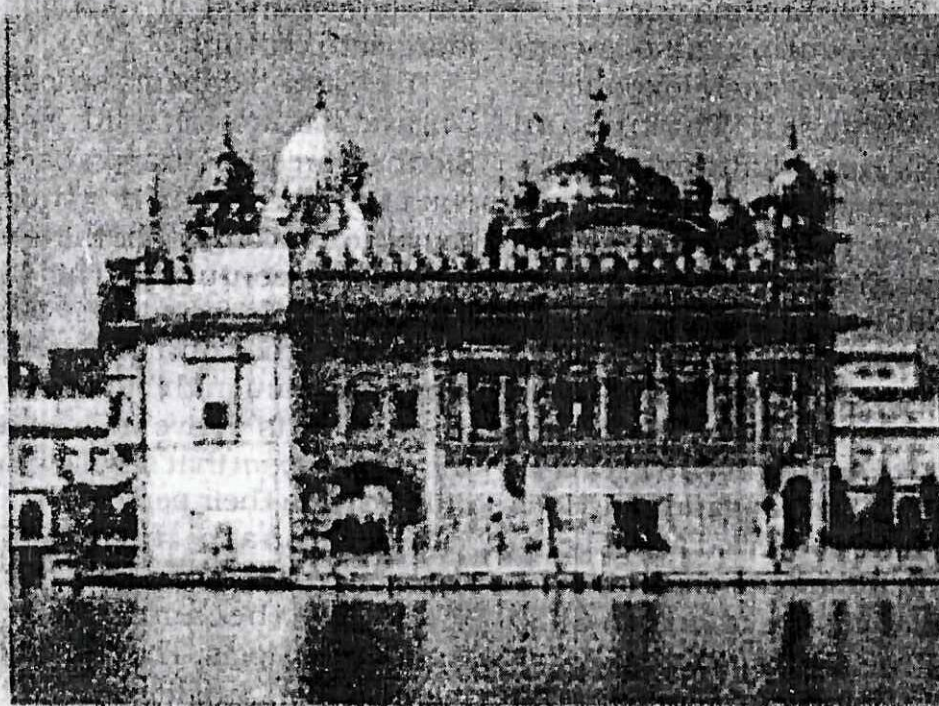
#### Birth of Sikhism

#### Birth of Sikhism

Guru Nanak was founder of the spiritual tradition known today as Sikhism.

Born in a Khatri family in the village of Talwandi in Punjab, in 1469, Guru Nanak from the outset had a philosophical nature and enjoyed the company of saints. At the age of thirty, he devoted himself to religious teaching.





*The Golden Temple*

Guru Nanak undertook several journeys in and outside the sub-continent. He was a widely travelled saint of medieval India. One of his verses refers to his visits in the "nine regions of the earth" (*nau-khand*). It is reasonably certain that he visited many important Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist pilgrimage sites and held discourses with proponents of all major belief systems then current in the country.

Guru Nanak finally settled at Kartarpur on the right bank of the Ravi and gave instructions (*sikhyā*) to all who came there. The Guru's Langar (Free Kitchen of the Guru) was setup and everyone, irrespective of caste, creed and status was welcomed to partake of

the holy food. Guru Nanak passed away in 1539.

Guru Nanak preached the unity of God and the unity of mankind and advocated devotion to God in place of ritualism. Like Kabir, he believed that devotion to one God could lead to salvation regardless of caste, creed or sect. He advocated a middle path in which spiritual life could be combined with the duties of the householder.

Guru Nanak's first successor, Guru Angad, developed the *Gurmukhi* script to preserve the founder's compositions for future generations. He also established centres for spreading Guru Nanak's teachings. The next three Gurus were Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram



Das and Guru Arjun. Guru Ram Das had a tank (*sarovar*) dug where it exists to this day at Amritsar. In the midst of the tank was constructed the Harmandir Sahib (Temple of God) now popularly known as the Golden Temple. Guru Arjun invited Mian Mir, a Sufi saint to lay its foundation stone. Guru Arjun also continued the work of compilation begun by the second Guru, to which he added the writings of several Hindu and Muslim saints. This became the *Adi Granth*, the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs.

#### Other Sects

Other Bhakti sects include the Dadupanthis founded by Dadu Dayal, a weaver from Ahmedabad, who composed many verses in Braj-bhasha and Rajasthani. His disciple Sundardas wrote the famous *Sundar Vilas*. The Satnami sect was established by Bir Bhan.

Scholars are of the view that the saints represented a synthesis of Vaishnava bhakti and the tradition of the Saivite Nath yogis, while being close in spirit to the heterodox religious traditions of India.

The *Bhagvata Purana*, devoted to Lord Krishna and ranked among the great *Puranas*, was, according to some scholars, composed in the tenth-eleventh centuries.

Sufism in India has often been perceived as the Islamic counterpart of Hindu mysticism. While it is true that Sufism represents the mystical trend in Islam, it is a movement that arose independently within the Muslim world,

and not as a consequence of its interface with Hinduism. Sufism came into contact with Hindu and Buddhist mystical ideas only after most of its distinctive traits had already developed.

The initial contacts between Sufism and Buddhism took place in north-west Persia and Central Asia. Buddhism seems to have influenced Sufism in Transoxiana at a later date. Certain Sufi exercises, specially the holding back of breath, appear to be derived from yogic *pranayam* via Buddhism. Scholars have noted that some of the *ziyarat*s (tombs or relics) of the Sufis in Central Asia are located on the ruins of Buddhist stupas. For instance, Balkh, a Buddhist monastic centre, became a Sufi stronghold.

By the twelfth century, Sufism had been completely integrated into orthodox Islam as a result of the efforts of al-Ghazzali, al-Hallaj and Ibn al-Arabi. In the Indian context, Sufis meticulously resolved their differences with the ulema and emphasised the need to follow the *Sharia*.

Of the various Sufi orders in India, the Chishti and Suhrawardi orders (*silsilas*) were the most prominent. The Chishti order was founded in India by Muinuddin Chishti, who arrived around A.D. 1192 and established his centre at Ajmer. Other important Sufi saints in India were Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaikh Hamiduddin, Shaikh Fariduddin Masud Ganj-i-Shakar, and the famous Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. The Sufis adopted the local language of the region in which they lived. In Punjab, for instance, Baba



Farid composed verses in Punjabi to disseminate his message among the people of the region.

Prominent saints of the Suhrawardi order in India include Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya, whose *khanqah* at Multan became an important pilgrimage centre.

The Qadiri *silsila* was established in India in the fifteenth century, while

the Shattari and Firdausi *silsila* were also introduced into the country in the Sultanate period. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Naqshbandi sect also grew in importance. Among its prominent leaders may be mentioned Khwaja Baqi Billah who arrived in India from Kabul in the last years of Akbar's reign, and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

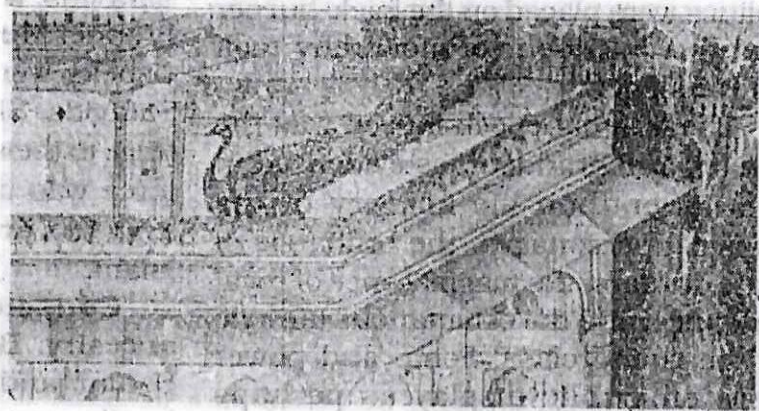
### Exercises

1. Describe the main features of a mosque.
2. What were the stages in the evolution of Muslim architecture in India?
3. What was the place of *Bhakti* in the Hindu tradition?
4. What was the social composition of the Alvar and Nayanar saints?
5. Whom do you regard as the greatest followers of Ramananda and why?
6. Briefly describe the evolution of the *Bhakti* movement in Bengal.
7. Who were the important *Bhakti* leaders in Maharashtra and what was their political relevance?
8. Explain how Sufism is rooted in Islam.
9. Describe the contacts between Sufism and Buddhism.
10. Describe the relationship between Sufism and orthodox Islam.
11. Give a brief account of the birth of Sikhism.
12. Write short notes on:
  - a) Quwwat-al-Islam mosque
  - b) Alai Darwaza
  - c) Tughlaqabad
  - d) Sayyid and Lodi tombs.
13. State whether the following are true or false:
  - a) Jayadeva composed the *Gita Govinda*.
  - b) Chandbardai wrote the *Padmavat*.
  - c) Jaisi was the author of *Prithviraj Raso*.



# CHAPTER 13

## FOUNDATION OF MUGHAL RULE



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**THE** Mughal era is often perceived as marking a new beginning in the history of Muslim rule in India. Unlike the fractious Sultanate period when the state resembled a theatre of war, Mughal rule is regarded as a time when contentious issues of religion and politics were placed on the back-burner and the splendour of monarchy took centre-stage.

The Mughal epoch indeed was the age of royal grandeur, as evidenced in the larger-than-life imagery of the imperial personages, the brilliance of state durbars, the magnificence of royal buildings, and the ostentatious lifestyle of the ruling class. Pomp and power were on public display as perhaps never before in India.

### **Babur (1526 – 1530)**

The Mughal empire was founded by Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, a fifth generation descendant of Timur, who had ransacked Delhi towards the close of the fourteenth century, massacred its populace, and taken away untold

treasures. After the death of Timur, his vast kingdom stretching from the lower Volga to the river Indus and incorporating modern Turkey, Iran, Transoxiana, Afghanistan and parts of Punjab had disintegrated, as it was periodically partitioned among his heirs in accordance with Turkish succession rules.

Babur ascended the throne of Farghana, a tiny principality in Transoxiana, in 1494, at the tender age of twelve. As he and other Timurid princes battled amongst themselves, a number of newly emerging powers sought to replace the fading lustre of Timur's empire. Chief among them were the Uzbeks, a Mongol tribe that had converted to Islam but were looked down upon by Timurid princes as uncultured barbarians, and the Safavids who claimed descent from Prophet Muhammad. The fact that the Uzbeks were Sunni Muslims and the Safavids, Shi'is, often lent a sectarian tinge to their struggles. Another growing force was that of the Ottoman Turks who, too, professed allegiance to Sunni Islam.

Conscious and proud of his ancestry, Babur was keen to capture Samarkand, the cultural heartland of his Timurid forebears. He won the city twice, but was checkmated by the Uzbeks and forced to seek the assistance of the Safavids. Although he succeeded in retaking Samarkand with their help, Babur, a Sunni, was unwilling to function as a long-term surrogate of the Shi'i Safavids. When the Uzbeks threw him out of



Samarqand yet again, he abandoned his homeland and carved out fresh territory for himself in Kabul. Settled in this poor terrain, Babur's gaze soon shifted to India, the fabled land of milk and honey that had enticed countless invaders, before him.

### **Indian Encounters**

The political situation in India favoured Babur. Following the eclipse of the Tughlaqs, the Afghans had replaced the Turks as the most influential foreign Muslim group in the country. The endeavours of the reigning Lodi ruler, Sultan Ibrahim, to enhance the powers of the monarchy in contravention of deeply rooted egalitarian traditions, had aroused the ire of his fellow Afghan chiefs. Foremost among them was Daulat Khan Lodi, the powerful governor of Punjab, whose uneven relationship with his sovereign proved to be the undoing of the Lodi empire.

Daulat Khan's efforts to extend his territories involved him in initial tussles with Babur, who was similarly engaged in an expansionist programme. These early clashes centred around a number of frontier tracts, which alternatively changed hands between the two.

In 1520-21, during one of his sorties across the Indus, Babur seized Sialkot and Lahore, thus paving the way for the eventual conquest of Hindustan. But further progress at this time was prevented by revolts back home, which forced him to retreat. After setting his house in order, Babur once again focused on India. It was at this time that the disgruntled Daulat Khan

invited him to dethrone Ibrahim Lodi. On his arrival at Peshawar, however, Babur was informed that Daulat Khan had retracted his support, so he resolved to battle with him. Daulat Khan's army retreated in the face of Babur's advancing force, and by default, Babur found himself master of the Punjab.

### **Panipat**

This was bound to lead to a confrontation with Ibrahim Lodi, the ruler of Delhi. In April 1526, the two sides met on the historic battlefield of Panipat, where two more equally critical battles were subsequently fought. Babur's effective use of field cannon and matchlockmen ensured the success of his much smaller force. Like several other rulers in India, the Lodi Sultan had failed to integrate firearms into his military machine, and thus proved unable to meet the Mughal challenge. Ibrahim Lodi along with over fifteen thousand soldiers, perished on the battlefield.

While the significance of the battle of Panipat cannot be underrated, it did not automatically ensure Babur mastery of Hindustan. The Afghans remained entrenched in several parts of India, principally the east, and continued to offer stiff resistance. In addition, Babur also had to overpower the Rajputs who had been the main challengers of the Afghans till his advent on the Indian scene. Further south, was the Vijayanagar empire, the mightiest in India at the time. It is, however, indisputable that the victory at Panipat



made Babur a serious contender for power in India.

Yet many of Babur's men were reluctant to prolong their stay in India to fight the tough battles that lay ahead. They found India uncongenial, especially during the oppressive summer season. The aggressiveness of the local populace was another discouraging factor. Babur himself was forced to take note of the "remarkable hostility" of the villagers, who abandoned their homes on the approach of his army.

Indeed, Babur, like his men, was also not too enthused about India. This can be discerned from his autobiography, the *Tuzuk-i-Baburi*, in which he notes that Hindustan was "a country of few charms." But Babur was equally certain that his destiny did not lie in poverty-stricken Kabul.

#### Khanua

By a mixture of persuasion and firmness, Babur was able to coax the majority of his soldiers to throw their lot with him and prepare for the momentous war with the Mewar leader, Rana Sangram Singh, popularly known as Rana Sanga. Aware of the high stakes, almost all Rajput leaders of stature had extended military support to the Rana. Indeed, the Rajputs were to constitute the main obstacle to the fulfillment of Babur's ambitions. Several Afghans, hopeful of recovering the lost throne of Delhi, also sided with the Rajput king. Such a formidable lineup, coupled with Rana Sanga's enviable reputation as a warrior, unnerved Babur's men.

Babur now solemnly declared that they were engaged in a religious war, *jihad*, to keep afloat the banner of Islam in a pagan land. In a dramatic gesture, he broke wine vessels and renounced drinking before the assembled troops. He also abolished *tamgha* (stamp duty) for Muslims.

Charged with religious fervour, the army marched to Khanua in 1527 where, despite fierce fighting by the opposing forces, Babur's guns and the enveloping tactics of the Central Asian cavalry (known in Turkish as *tabur jangi*) carried the day. Apart from its political implications, the outcome was significant for other reasons as well. Babur's effective use of artillery and mounted archers considerably undermined the elephant-based system of warfare till then dominant in India.

Babur recorded the event in his diary with tremendous elation. "For Islam's sake," he wrote, "I wandered in the wilds, Prepared for war with Pagans and Hindus, Resolved myself to meet the martyr's death. Thanks be to God! a ghazi I became."

The death of Rana Sanga and several other Rajput leaders of note, considerably weakened the possibility of a Rajput resurgence in north India. Babur followed his success by attacking Chanderi in Malwa, then the stronghold of a Rajput ally of Rana Sanga. The Rajputs fought to the last man and their women performed *jauhar*. Now well positioned in the Delhi-Agra region, Babur undertook the conquest of a number of forts east of Agra, foremost



among them being Gwalior and Dholpur.

### **Afghans Again**

Babur's advance, however, was halted by the Afghans of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Though they had professed allegiance to Babur, they resented Mughal rule and were eager to become independent again. They were encouraged by the Bengal ruler, Nusrat Shah, who had married a daughter of Ibrahim Lodi. The Afghans expelled Babur's officers from the area and marched upto Kanauj. Mahmud Lodi, a brother of Ibrahim Lodi, reached Bihar and assumed the leadership of the movement.

At the beginning of 1529, Babur moved east to meet the Afghan challenge. He faced the combined armies of the Afghans and Nusrat Shah near Ghagra, but failed to decisively settle matters in his favour. Most of Bihar continued to remain with the Afghan chiefs. Babur returned to Agra and died shortly thereafter. He had left written instructions that he be buried in Kabul. For a while his body was entombed in the Aram Bagh in Agra, opposite the present site of the Taj Mahal. Sometime between 1539 and 1544, however, his remains were transported to his final resting place in Kabul, at a site he himself had chosen.

### **Assessment**

In addition to being a talented soldier and strategist, Babur had wide-ranging interests and varied skills. He was a keen lover and observer of nature.

His memoirs contain surprisingly detailed accounts of the flora and fauna of India. The *char baghs*, the symmetrically laid out gardens with flowing waters and fountains, were



*A Mughal painting depicting Babur with guests in his palace*

introduced into India by Babur. He was also a writer of great elegance, proficient in Persian, Arabic as well as his native Turkish. The *Tuzuk-i-Baburi*, besides being a refined piece of prose writing, is an invaluable source material for understanding the times in which he lived.



Another facet of Babur's personality manifested itself in India. Some scholars have pointed out that before coming to India Babur had not displayed undue interest in matters of religion. Here, however, his notable acts included the construction of mosques. This was significant because until he came to India there is no evidence of his having patronised religious architecture. The sites were carefully selected. While the mosque commissioned at Panipat celebrated Babur's victory over the Lodis, two other mosques were sponsored at places sacred to Hindu tradition. Sambhal was where the tenth and last *avatar* of Vishnu was to appear at the end of the *yuga* (era), and Ayodhya was revered as the birthplace of Lord Rama.

Babur died in 1530, after having lived for merely four years in India. He bequeathed his heirs an uncertain legacy, as his conquests could not be consolidated into a stable kingdom.

### **Humayun (1530 - 1556)**

Upon the death of Babur, Humayun succeeded his father, but as per the Timurid tradition, was forced to share power with his brothers. Thus, Mirza Sulaiman was given Badakhshan, Mirza Kamran inherited Kabul and Qandhar, while Askari and Hindal received territories to administer within India. In violation of the agreed division, however, Mirza Kamran, forcibly occupied Punjab, further reducing Humayun's already truncated legacy.

Humayun's position was unenviable on other counts as well.

Apart from the rickety administrative apparatus and the even more precarious financial situation, his kingdom was threatened by the unyielding Afghans who nursed ambitions of reviving their lost empire. Humayun attained early successes over the Afghans in the east but failed to consolidate his gains.

Meanwhile, a new danger surfaced in Gujarat. The ruler, Sultan Bahadur Shah, sought to extend his hegemony by occupying Malwa, attacking Rajasthan, and entering into negotiations with the Afghans in the north-east in order to expel the Mughals from India. Many Afghans had been granted refuge in the court of Bahadur Shah, who had considerably augmented his army by equipping it with cannon and employing Portuguese gunners.

Humayun exhibited considerable military skills and personal valour in the campaign against Bahadur Shah and even managed to defeat him. Yet the Mughal forces withdrew without either deposing the ruler or annexing the kingdom.

Meanwhile, in Bihar, the Afghans rallied around the rising new leader, Sher Khan Sur. In 1537, Sher Khan invaded Bengal and besieged the ruler, Mahmud Shah, at his capital, Gaur. Aware of the political implications of these developments, Humayun marched to the aid of the Bengal ruler. But instead of relieving Gaur, he laid siege to the Chunar fort, which had recently come into Sher Khan's possession. This faulty strategy



facilitated Sher Khan's eventual takeover of Bengal.

Sher Khan further enhanced his prestige and position in the Afghan-Mughal battle at Chausa in 1539, where Humayun's forces were completely routed and Humayun himself narrowly escaped alive. Sher Khan now assumed the title of Sher Shah. A final battle between the two forces near Kanauj in 1540 could not tilt the scales in favour of the Mughals. The Afghans had triumphed politically once again and Sher Shah emerged as the new ruler of north India.

Humayun spent the next fifteen years in exile, in search of allies to reclaim his throne. Disillusioned, he finally left India in 1544 for the Safavid court in Persia, where further troubles awaited him. The ruler, Shah Tahmasp, forced him and his followers to recant Sunni Islam and accept the Shi'i faith as the price for shelter and help.

### **The Afghan Interregnum**

#### **Sher Shah (1540 - 1545)**

The credit for founding the second Afghan kingdom goes to Sher Shah Sur, the son of a small jagirdar from Jaunpur. Following the death of Ibrahim Lodi, Sher Shah had by a series of deft moves gained possession of vast treasures which he utilised to heavily arm himself and emerge as one of the most powerful Afghan leaders. After ousting Humayun from the throne of Delhi, he became the supreme ruler of northern India, his dominions extending from Bengal to the Indus, excluding Kashmir.

Sher Shah did not belong to any of the leading Afghan tribes. Hence, at the start of his career, he failed to elicit the support of the elite Afghan families such as the Lodis, Sarwanis, Nuhanis and Farmulis that dominated the Lodi era. He instead had to rely upon the Sur, Niazi, Sirbini and other Afghan groups and non-Afghan Muslims willing to join him. Gradually, however, the surviving privileged members of the Lodi era felt compelled to come to terms with him.

### **The Rajput Challenge**

As in the past, Rajputs posed a major threat. Sher Shah was particularly perturbed by the activities of Raja Maldeo of Marwar. Sher Shah got the better of him in the battle of Samel in 1544. As a consequence of this defeat, the neighbouring Rana of Mewar felt constrained to surrender Chittor to Sher Shah who, in the course of ten months, had overrun large parts of Rajasthan.

In continuance of his war against the Rajputs, Sher Shah settled Afghan families in Gwalior and other troublesome areas with a view to colonising them. He also realised *jaziya* from the Hindus.

Sher Shah has been censured by a number of modern historians for sanctioning the massacre of the Rajputs of Raisin as well as for his dealings with Raja Maldeo to earn religious merit. Some scholars have, however, argued in defence of Sher Shah, stating that the Rajput chiefs constituted a force almost everywhere in India and were too



powerful to be left alone. They concede that though Sher Shah did seek to eliminate those Rajput chiefs who could not reconcile to his rule, yet he befriended those who were willing to accept him, such as the Ujjainya Rajputs.

#### Administrative Measures

His relatively modest origins and Afghan egalitarian traditions notwithstanding, Sher Shah functioned as a despotic ruler who brooked no opposition to his policies. He maintained tight control over the administration, delegating no real powers to his ministers and officers, and in fact set up an efficient espionage system to keep himself informed of their activities. To further bolster his authority and status, Sher Shah established strict decorum and procedures at court, and insisted they be meticulously observed.

Towards the same end, he considerably strengthened his military might. He divided the army into three segments, the sawars, the elephants, and the footmen, with the sawars serving as the linchpin of the entire organisation. His personal force, known as the royal *Khasa Khail*, consisted of one-lakh-fifty-thousand sawars, twenty-five thousand foot soldiers and artillery. He also revived the system of *dagh* and *chehra* which Alauddin Khalji had successfully introduced some centuries ago.

Sher Shah also improved communications within his empire. He restored the Grand Trunk Road, the *Uttarapatha* of ancient times which ran from Tamralipti (Bengal) to Purushpur

(modern Peshawar) and beyond. He built a road running from Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor and another from Lahore to Multan. In addition, he had a number of *sarais* (rest-houses) built. The medieval historian Badauni states that Sher Shah issued a public proclamation that from Bengal to western Rohtas which was a four-month journey, as also from Agra to Mandu, a *sarai*, a well, and a mosque be established at every *kroh* and an imam (prayer leader) appointed. A Muslim and a Hindu were also to be recruited to provide water to members of their respective communities.

#### Land Revenue Under Sher Shah

Land revenue constituted the principal source of state income under Sher Shah, as in the Sultanate period. To enhance collections and streamline procedures, Sher Shah introduced a schedule of crop-rates (*rai*) for the first time in India. The produce per *bigha* from the good, middling and poor soils was taken into account to determine the average yield, one-third of which was fixed as the state demand. The state share could be converted into cash on the basis of the prevailing market rates.

As before, the village (*mauza*) was the lowest unit of revenue. The hereditary chiefs of the villages were responsible for tax collection in their areas and functioned as intermediaries between the state and the peasants.

A group of villages, varying between fifty and hundred or more than hundred, formed a *pargana*, which was headed by a *shiqdar*. The latter discharged both civil and military



duties, was accountable for law and order, and also helped revenue officers (*amils*) in the realisation of land revenue. If necessary, he provided them military assistance against rebellious zamindars who resisted paying government dues.

The officers working under the *shiqdar* included the *amils*, *amins*, and *qazis*. Besides revenue collection, the *amils* were entrusted with the construction and repair of embankments and the protection of cultivable land. The *amins* were to oversee the measurement of land under cultivation for determining the state share. Other officials at *pargana* level were the *khazanadar* (treasurer), the *munsif-i-khazana* (treasury inspector), and the *qanungo* (in charge of maintaining revenue records). A number of *parganas* constituted a *sarkar*.

### Currency Reforms

Sher Shah made major reforms in the currency. In place of the debased

coinage then in circulation, he struck coins of uniform standard in gold, silver and copper. He also attempted to introduce uniform weights and measures throughout his kingdom.

### Successors

Sher Shah died in 1545 after a brief rule of five years. His successors proved unable to retain their hold on power. After the demise of his son and successor, Islam Shah, the Sur domains were partitioned among the relatives of Sher Shah. The divisions mainly were the Punjab; Agra and Delhi; Bihar and the eastern region; and Bengal, each given to a Sur kin of Sher Shah. In 1555, just a decade after Sher Shah's death, Humayun defeated Sikandar, the Sur ruler of Punjab, reoccupied Delhi and revived the moribund Mughal reign. Within seven months, however, he himself passed away after a fall from the steps of his library.

## Exercises

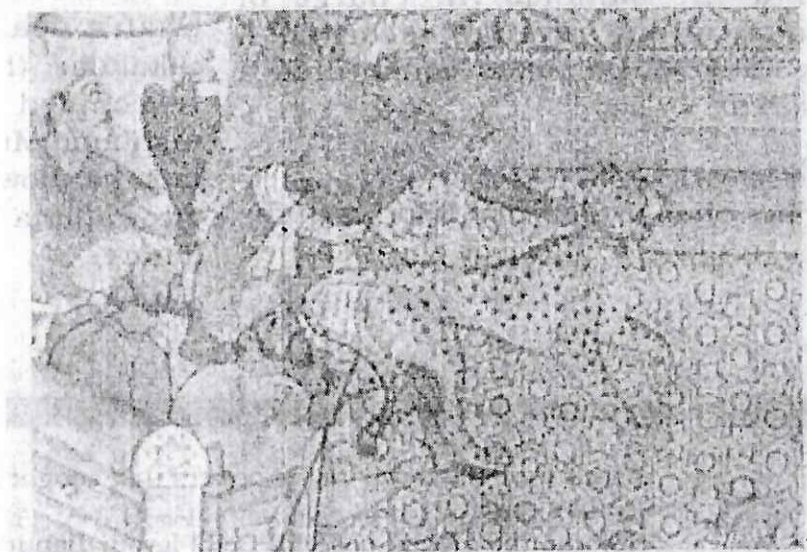
1. Which were the newly rising powers that sought to replace the glory of Timur's empire?
2. How did the Afghan polity of Delhi favour Babur?
3. Describe Babur's encounter with Rajput power in India.
4. Evaluate and assess Babur's position in Indian history.
5. Briefly describe the military campaigns of Humayun.
6. Mention the Afghan tribes that rose to prominence under Sher Shah.
7. "Sher Shah is best remembered for his revenue reforms." Comment.
8. Describe Sher Shah's dealings with the Rajputs.



# 14 CHAPTER

## INDIA UNDER AKBAR

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**AKBAR** (1556 – 1605) was undoubtedly the brightest star of the Mughal Empire, according to some the greatest of all medieval rulers of India. He not only re-won north India for the Mughals, but authored strategies and policies that guaranteed his family a long spell of rule. His policies proved so pragmatic that they endured even under those of his successors whose temperament and disposition differed greatly from his own.

### **Early Conquests and Uprisings**

Akbar was born in 1542 at Amarkot, when his father, Humayun, was in flight from India. Thirteen and a half years later, in 1556, he succeeded his father amidst mounting threats to his patrimony. One immediate challenge came from Hemu, a fascinating but neglected figure in medieval Indian history.

Hailing from a poor mercantile family, Hemu had risen by sheer dint of ability to the post of head of the intelligence department under the

Afghan ruler, Islam Shah Sur. Subsequently, he was appointed Chief Minister by Adil Shah, and was almost wholly responsible for political and military matters in the Afghan kingdom. While in Afghan service, Hemu captured Ajmer and Delhi after defeating the Mughal forces stationed there. He then declared himself independent, and invoking the *sanskritic* monarchical traditions, assumed the title of Raja Hemchandra Vikramaditya.

Bairam Khan, Akbar's tutor and wazir for the first four years of his reign, retrieved the situation by denying Hemu time to consolidate his hold on Mughal territory and forcing him to an early fight. In 1556, the second battle of Panipat was fought between the two opposing forces. Despite stiff resistance, the tide turned against the Afghan forces when Hemu was wounded by a stray arrow. He was captured and slain.

Akbar's position was further strengthened during Bairam Khan's regency, as the Mughals won a series of battles in quick succession and warded off other Afghan contenders. They defeated the Afghan, Sikandar Sur, who fled to Bengal, and also captured Lahore, Multan and Ajmer. The Mughals then vanquished Ibrahim Sur and annexed Jaunpur, besides laying a successful siege to Gwalior fort, also under Afghan control. Thus, the core area of the Sultanate soon came under the effective possession of Akbar.

By now weary of Bairam Khan's tutelage, Akbar discharged his *wazir*, who was assassinated en route to Mecca shortly afterwards. Akbar



married Bairam Khan's widow and took his infant son under his protection. The child, Abdul Rahim Khan Khana, was to become one of the leading officers of the empire and a Hindi poet of note.



*Akbar giving audience to Abdul Rahim Khan Khana at Agra in 1562*

The government now came to be dominated by Akbar's foster mother, Maham Anaga and her relatives, especially her son Adham Khan. Mughal expansion continued during this period, with Adham Khan commanding the invasion of the

kingdom of Malwa. Its ruler, Baz Bahadur, an accomplished musician and poet, was badly defeated and fled, leaving behind his family and vast treasures. The chief queen, Rupamati, preferred to take her life than become a Mughal captive. Adham Khan followed his victory at Malwa with the almost total massacre of the defending army; even the women and children of the garrison were not spared.

These atrocities created widespread revulsion against the Mughals and facilitated Baz Bahadur's exertions to regain his kingdom. This necessitated the recall of Adham Khan, a second Mughal invasion of Malwa, and the final annexation of the kingdom. The fall of Malwa was accompanied by the eclipse of the petticoat government from royal favour and the emergence of the Emperor as a ruler in his own right.

Meanwhile, the Afghans once again raised their heads in the east. The Mughals, however, were able to capture Chunar, an Afghan stronghold, and thus bring to a close the first round of their expansionist drive eastwards.

In 1564, Akbar attacked the powerful and rich Gond kingdom of Gondwana. Its queen, Rani Durgawati, a Chandella princess from Mahoba, fought valiantly but killed herself to avoid capture when defeat seemed inevitable. A large number of royal women committed *jauhar*. The Emperor's official historian, Abul Fazl, wrote that "so much plunder in jewels, gold, silver, and other things were taken that it is impossible to commute even a fraction of it."



Between 1561 and 1567, Akbar was engulfed by a serious challenge from his Uzbek (Central Asian) nobles. Many of them traced their descent from the Uzbek chief who had driven Babur out of Samarqand, and had come to India with Humayun. They formed a powerful constituent of the Mughal nobility and held important posts in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Malwa, where they had helped subdue the Afghans. The Uzbeks were unhappy with Akbar's growing stature and craved for a more equitable political order with less gulf between the status of the ruler and his officers. As Sunni Muslims, they were also suspicious of the Emperor's Shi'i Persian officers.

While Akbar fought a series of battles with his Uzbek nobles, his half-brother, Mirza Hakim, governor of Kabul, besieged Lahore and was proclaimed emperor of Hindustan by the Uzbeks. At this crucial juncture, a group of Timurid nobles, called the Mirzas, also turned against the Emperor.

By sheer grit and determination, Akbar was able to overcome these multiple threats to his sovereignty. Mirza Hakim was forced to withdraw to Kabul, the Mirzas suppressed, and the Uzbeks routed by 1567.

The uprising of the Uzbeks brought home to Akbar the perils of exclusive dependence on his foreign nobility. His father, Humayun, on his return to India had been accompanied by a group of fifty-one nobles, the majority of whom were from Central Asia and the rest from Persia.

The mutiny by the Uzbeks prompted Akbar to consciously reduce the Central Asian component in his nobility while increasing that of the Persians. Despite the reshuffle, therefore, foreign Muslims still comprised the bulk of his governing class. However, the Emperor began to induct limited numbers of Rajputs and Indian Muslims into the ruling elite.

### **Akbar and the Rajputs**

The Rajputs remained a formidable force in northern India despite their setback at the Battle of Khanua. Akbar realised that military action alone would not suffice to subdue them, hence he sought to forge alliances with them.

Akbar's encounter with the Rajputs began on a fairly harmonious note. In 1562, Bhara Mal, ruler of the small state of Amber, allied with Akbar to ward off pressure from a hostile Mughal governor. He gave his daughter in marriage to the Emperor and joined imperial service along with numerous relatives, including his son, Bhagwan Das, and grandson, Man Singh. Other Rajput rulers, however, were slow to follow his example and Akbar had to resort to massive use of force to compel them to surrender.

The house of Mewar, the most prestigious of the Rajput clans and ruled by the proud Sisodias, had a history of defiance of Mughal rule. Its illustrious scion, Rana Sanga, had led the Rajput confederacy against Babur in the famous battle of Khanua. If Akbar was to be the master of Hindustan, it was imperative that he subjugate





A miniature Mughal painting of the siege of Chittor by Akbar

Mewar, which besides its political importance also linked the trade routes of the Gangetic plains with the western coast. Hence, in 1567, he led his army into a *jihad* against the state, then ruled by Udai Singh. As the Mughals laid siege to Chittor, the fortified capital city, the Rana, on the advice of his nobles, made a tactical retreat to the hills, leaving the fort in charge of the legendary warriors, Jaimal and Fatha.

The siege of Chittor must rank among the bloodiest in Mughal history.

The use of mines and canons by the Mughal forces finally led to the fall of the fort after six months of heroic struggle. The women in the fort committed *jauhar*. The valiant Rajput defence so enraged the Emperor that he let loose three hundred war elephants on the besieged people. Altogether eight thousand soldiers perished in the battle. The Mughals butchered about thirty thousand peasants who had taken shelter in the fort on the ground that they had participated in its defence. A victory proclamation (*fatehnama*) issued soon after hailed the success of the holy war against the infidels. The Emperor also went on foot to the *dargah* of Muinuddin Chishti in Ajmer for thanksgiving.

The fall of Chittor rendered the whole of Rajputana vulnerable to Mughal pressure. In 1569, employing massive siege guns, Akbar surrounded the fort of Ranthambor, then under Rai Surjan Hada, a vassal of Udai Singh. The Rai surrendered when it became apparent that he would not be able to withstand the imperial assault. Several Rajput kings, convinced of the futility of holding out to Mughal might, followed suit, including the rulers of Bikaner and Jaisalmer. Mewar, however, kept the beacon of resistance alive.

The redoubtable Rana Pratap ascended the throne of Mewar in 1572 on the death of Udai Singh. Having been rebuffed in his attempts to persuade the Rana to accept Mughal suzerainty and render personal homage, Akbar ordered Man Singh to



lead the campaign against the Rajput ruler. In 1576, a bitter battle was fought at the Haldi Ghati Pass. The Rana's force consisted of three thousand horse and a few hundred Bhil infantry, while Man Singh commanded an elite cavalry of ten thousand. The son of Jaimal, Ram Das Rathor also fought alongside the Rana.

Initially, the Rajputs had the upper hand and the Mughal forces were in disarray. However, rumours of Akbar's arrival with reinforcements dramatically reversed the situation. With the battle now going against the vastly outnumbered Rajputs, the Rana withdrew to the hills. Worn out by the fierce battle, the imperial forces were too exhausted to immediately pursue him. Soon after, the Mughals occupied Gogunda, a Rana stronghold.

This setback did not deter Rana Pratap, who kept up a guerilla resistance against the Mughals, harassing imperial troops and disrupting their supply lines whenever possible. Other Rajput states allied with Mewar, like Sirohi, Dungarpur, Banswara, Idar, and Bundi, were also in ferment, forcing Akbar to initiate a series of campaigns against them. By 1577, he was able to subjugate most of them.

The Mughals continued to hunt down Rana Pratap, and even occupied Kumbhalgarh and Udaipur. The Rana suffered enormous hardships, but the assistance of the Bhil chiefs enabled him to continue his defiance. After 1579, however, the Mughal pressure on the Rana eased as revolts in eastern

India and developments on the north-west frontier increasingly engaged the Emperor. The Rana seized this opportunity to recover a major portion of his kingdom.

Akbar also faced trouble in Marwar, another premier Rajput state. Its ruler, Chandrasen, dissatisfied with the Emperor's interventions in his family affairs, revolted and waged guerilla warfare against the Mughals. Akbar took Marwar under direct imperial administration and after Chandrasen's death, placed the latter's elder brother, Udai Singh, on the throne.

### **Fatehpur Sikri**

In 1571, Akbar shifted from Agra to Fatehpur Sikri, a new city constructed on his orders, which was to serve as his residence for the next fifteen years. Its principal architectural features were the great congregational mosque, and the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti, Akbar's spiritual guide. During these years Akbar maintained the closest links with Salim Chishti and members of his family. While at Fatehpur Sikri, he took keen interest in the affairs of the mosque, on occasion even sweeping its floors and officiating as prayer leader. At this time, Akbar also sponsored pilgrimages to the holy city of Mecca. After the conquest of Gujarat in 1574, he enlarged the religious trust (Waqf) constituted by the last ruler of Gujarat to send donations to Mecca and Medina.

### **Further Conquests**

In 1572 Akbar began a fresh round of conquests. He first marched against



Gujarat, a fertile and prosperous region, home to a flourishing textile industry and one of the busiest seaports of Hindustan. He captured the capital city, Ahmedabad, without much difficulty. The king, Muzaffar Shah, and almost all his nobles capitulated. Akbar also took the opportunity to defeat the Mirza rebels who had taken shelter in the province. Having thus secured Gujarat, the Emperor entrusted it to Mughal officers and returned to Fatehpur Sikri.

No sooner had he returned than Gujarat revolted against Mughal authority. In a daring act of courage, Akbar quick-marched back with a small army, covering a distance of over eight hundred kilometers in just eleven days. A furious battle ensued; the Emperor successfully crushed the rebellion and re-established Mughal hold in the region.

Bengal and Bihar, however, still remained outside the sphere of effective Mughal rule and under the control of a motley group of Afghan princes and nobles. In 1574, Daud Khan, the ruler of Bengal, declared himself independent of Akbar, forcing the latter to take the field himself. Daud Khan fled on the approach of the imperial army and Akbar formally annexed Bengal and Bihar. However, Daud Khan managed to regain Bengal, necessitating a second Mughal invasion in 1576, which ended in his capture and execution. Individual Afghan leaders continued to prey on the Mughal forces whenever feasible.

In 1580, a rebellion again broke out in Bengal and Bihar. Though

resentment against the *Mahzar* may have played a part in the uprising, Akbar's efforts to streamline the working of the army and bring about greater efficiency in its functioning were the principal causes of the unrest. Akbar had ordered that all imperial officers bring their horses for inspection and only those that met the royal specifications be branded (*dagh*), entitling their owners to full payment. The officers regarded this as an encroachment on their privileges.

As in the past, the Central Asian nobles provided the leadership of the insurrection by joining the Bengal rebels and killing the governor of Bengal. Akbar's half brother, Mirza Hakim, was again declared the legitimate ruler of Hindustan, while a *qazi* in Jaunpur issued a *fatwa* (religious decree) asking all true Muslims to participate in the campaign against the Emperor. The Afghans in Bengal, inveterate enemies of the Mughals, also joined the insurgency.

An imperial army sent to Bihar re-occupied the major cities, while the Emperor himself marched to Kabul and dethroned Mirza Hakim. Yet it was to be another five years before the situation in West Bengal was fully brought under control.

In 1585, Akbar transferred his capital to Lahore in order to effect a greater integration of the north-west into the Mughal Empire. Apart from establishing a firmer hold over Kabul, the Emperor took measures to protect the caravan route frequently disrupted by Afghan tribes, especially the



Yusufzais. The Mughal pacification campaign proved to be a long drawn out affair, in which Raja Birbal (immortalised in countless legends for his wisdom and wit) lost his life. Akbar eventually managed to impose his will on the area. In 1595, Baluchistan and Qandhar also came into Mughal hands.

During this period, Kashmir (1585) and Sindh (1591) too came under imperial sway. In 1592, Raja Man Singh, governor of Bihar, annexed Orissa, which was made part of suba Bengal.

Akbar now returned to Agra to direct operations against the Deccan, the one frontier the Mughal armies had yet to cross.

#### Akbar and the Deccan

The five leading states of the Deccan at this time were Khandesh ruled by the Farruqis, Ahmadnagar by the Nizam Shahs, Berar by the Imad Shahs, Bijapur by the Adil Shahs and Golconda by the Qutb Shahs. Shi'ism was the state religion in Golconda, and Shi'is emerged as a strong group in Bijapur and Ahmadnagar as well.

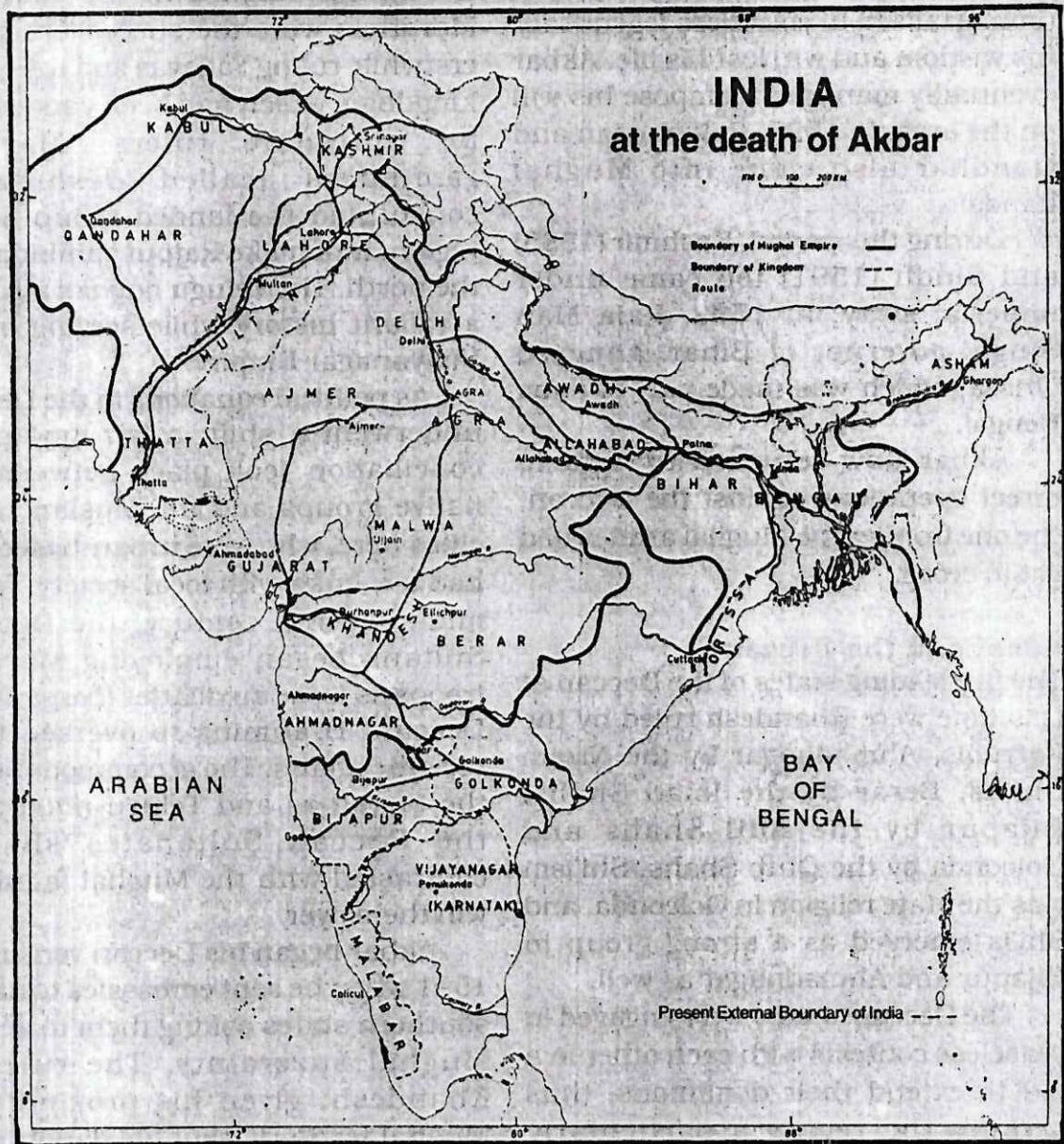
The Deccani states were engaged in ceaseless contests with each other in a bid to extend their dominions, thus making the region a particularly turbulent one. An agreement reached between Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, however, left the former free to expand in the southerly direction at the expense of the declining Vijayanagar kingdom, while the latter annexed Berar.

Other active players in the Deccan included the Marathas in the west and the Telugu *nayaks* in the east. The Marathas were the successors of the erstwhile ruling Yadavas and the Hindu kingdoms which had been vanquished by Sultanate rulers. Maratha zamindars (called *deshmukhs*) constituted the landed group in the region, much like Rajput zamindars in the north. The Telugu *nayaks* also had a valiant history while serving in the Vijayanagar Empire.

As political equations in the Deccan underwent a shift, a fair amount of conciliation took place between the native groups and the Muslim ruling elites here, who were urban-based and had few links with local society. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Deccani Sultans began employing Maratha troops as loose auxiliaries (*bargirs*) and Deccani Brahmins to oversee their revenue affairs. The accommodation of the Marathas and Telugu *nayaks* by the Deccan Sultanates sharply contrasted with the Mughal failure to win them over.

Akbar began his Deccan venture in 1591 when he sent embassies to all the southern states asking them to accept Mughal suzerainty. The ruler of Khandesh, given his proximity to Mughal territory, sent his daughter in marriage to Akbar's son, Prince Salim, as a placatory gesture. However, the other Deccani Sultans spurned the imperial offer. Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar adopted a distinctly unfriendly tone, but his death in 1595





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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.



and the ensuing struggle for succession gave Akbar an opportunity to intervene.

The deceased Sultan's sister, Chand Bibi, championed the cause of Burhan's infant son and also elicited support from the Bijapur sovereign, who was her relative. The rival faction of the Deccani's now invited Akbar to intercede.

The Mughal army reached the capital without difficulty. Chand Bibi and the infant ruler took refuge in the Ahmadnagar fort, which the Mughals besieged. A relief army dispatched by the Sultans of Bijapur and Golconda compelled the Mughals to come to a settlement. Accordingly, in 1596, Chand Bibi agreed to cede Berar to the Mughals and to accept their sovereignty in return for recognition of the claims of her nephew, Bahadur Nizam Shah.

The Deccani states were, however, greatly perturbed by the Mughal annexation of Berar and feared for their own survival. In a bid to eject Mughal forces from the region, Bijapur and Golconda joined Ahmadnagar in an attempt to thwart the Mughal takeover of Berar. The combined forces of the three states invaded Berar in 1597, but were humbled by the Mughals. Bijapur and Golconda retreated, leaving Chand Bibi to tackle the messy situation. Though she was willing to honour the treaty of 1596, she was unable to rein in her nobles who continued to harass Mughal forces. This resulted in a second siege of Ahmadnagar. When Chand Bibi again entered into negotiations with the Mughals, she was murdered by a rival faction. The Mughals now occupied

Ahmadnagar and imprisoned the young king; Balaghat was also annexed to the empire. At this stage, however, the Mughals refrained from pressing beyond the capital of Ahmadnagar and trying to occupy the rest of the state.

The Mughal armies then marched to Khandesh, where the new ruler had adopted a defiant attitude. At the approach of the imperial army, he took shelter in the fort of Asirgarh, reputed to be the strongest in the Deccan. Akbar himself directed the siege which was to be his last major military command. Mughal pressure combined with the outbreak of an epidemic compelled the ruler to surrender. So along with Berar and a portion of Ahmadnagar, Khandesh too became part of the Mughal Empire. But the Mughal hold on the area was not firm, and the Emperor was forced to leave the Deccan in April 1601 to deal with the revolt of his son, Prince Salim.

Meanwhile, in Ahmadnagar, Malik Ambar, an Abyssinian, assumed charge of the affairs of the state. He installed a Nizam Shah prince on the throne and recruited large numbers of Maratha soldiers, whose skills in guerilla warfare were more than a match for the heavily armed Mughal forces. In the face of this development, the Mughal forces found it difficult to consolidate their hold on Berar, Ahmadnagar and Balaghat.

### **Imperial Ideology**

While Akbar was winning an empire for himself, his close friend and ideologue, Abul Fazl, was creating a new dynastic ideology for the Emperor. Scholars have pointed out that Abul Fazl combined



the Timurid model of kingship with the Sufi doctrine of illuminationism, as articulated by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul (1153-1191), to produce a distinctive Mughal theory of kingship.

Shihabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul had argued that all life owed its existence to the steady illumination from God. Further, every man was blessed with a divine spark, though only the highest category of mankind could be masters of the age.

Taking up this theme, Abul Fazl presented Akbar as the divinely chosen one of his epoch. The Emperor, Abul Fazl said, could not only trace his ancestry to Timur, but much further back in time, to a Mughal princess whose offsprings were the result of a divine light.

Abul Fazl presented Akbar as not only divinely blessed, but also as the patriarch of the state, responsible for the well-being of all subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It was his duty to extend the canopy of justice to all, irrespective of sectarian affiliations. Akbar himself perceived the sovereign's role as that of a just, impartial and benevolent guardian. "Divine worship in monarchs," he observed, "consists in their justice and good administration." Little wonder that *suleh-kul*, peace with all, was Akbar's motto.

The imperial ideology enunciated by Abul Fazl and enforced by Akbar is generally viewed as diverging from the Islamic theory of state, which unambiguously accorded differential status to non-Muslim subjects. Some

scholars have argued that Akbar's political ideology elicited poor response from Islamic religious divines and Sufi leaders like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

### Religious Evolution

Simultaneously with extending the frontiers of the empire and articulating a new dynastic ideology, Akbar was also charting out fresh spiritual territory for himself and his kingdom.

In 1563, he inaugurated a new deal for the Hindus by abolishing the pilgrimage tax, which used to be levied on them when they visited their holy places (*teerthas*). The Emperor also permitted Hindus to repair old temples and build new ones. Moreover, all those who had been compelled to accept Islam against their will were permitted to revert to their old faith without fear of the death penalty enjoined by the *Sharia* (Muslim law). Akbar also prohibited the forcible conversion of prisoners of war, a common practice at that time.

In 1575, he commissioned construction of the *Ibadat Khana* (house of worship) at Fatehpur Sikri, to discuss matters of faith. Initially, participation was restricted to the ulema and the deliberations centred around Islam. But the narrow world-view of the ulema failed to attract the intellectually agile Emperor who wished to give his reign a far greater legitimacy than so far accorded to Islamic regimes in the subcontinent.

Akbar now expanded the discussions in the *Ibadat Khana* to include other creeds. Hindus, Jains,



Parsis, and Christians were invited to present their religious perceptions to the inquiring Emperor. Badauni describes the intensity of Akbar's spiritual quest, stating that, "day and night people did nothing but enquire into and investigate the profound secrets of science, the subtleties of revelation, the curiosities of history and the wonders of nature.... His Majesty has passed through the various phases and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs, and has collected everything which people can find in books..."

Pursuing his quest, Akbar held discussions with leading Brahmin scholars like Purushottam and Devi. The eminent Jain divine, Hiravijaya Suri, stayed at the royal court for two years and was listed by Abul Fazl as among the twenty-one learned men at court who were acquainted with the mysteries of both worlds. Among several other Jain scholars, whom the Emperor invited, was the great Jin Chandra Suri, who travelled on foot from Cambay to Lahore in 1591. Declining to accept the costly gifts proffered by the Emperor, he explained to him the tenets of Jainism.

The noted Zoroastrian priest, Dastur Mahyarji Rana of Navsari, also participated in the deliberations at the Ibadat Khana. He expounded the doctrines and practices of the Parsi religion. He was given a gift of two hundred *bighas* of land by the Emperor, with the right to bequeath it to his son. A sacred fire prepared according to Parsi rites was permanently preserved

at the palace, under the charge of Abul Fazl. Around this time Akbar began to engage in extensive worship of the Sun and Light. Three Christian missions also visited the court after 1580.

In 1579, Akbar abolished the *jaziya*. This was a truly revolutionary gesture, and one that set him apart from all Muslim rulers in the sub-continent. The same year, he issued the controversial *Mahzar*, prepared on his instructions by Shaikh Mubarak, father of Abul Fazl. The *Mahzar* was a decree, which entitled the Emperor to choose one of the interpretations of Muslim law presented by the ulema in case of disagreement within its ranks. The *Mahzar* was disliked by the ulema, which viewed it as an imperial infringement on its turf. Leading religious officers and divines were coerced to endorse this document, but some repudiated it.

The move that has attracted the greatest attention, however, is Akbar's proclamation of the *Din-i-Ilahi*. This is surprising since the *Din-i-Ilahi* never acquired the status of a mass movement. Its membership was restricted to a miniscule group, even at the peak of the *Ilahi* wave. Part of the interest is due to the *Din-i-Ilahi's* alleged connection with the Emperor's views on Islam. Intrigued to this day by the *Ilahi's* apparent unorthodoxy, scholars have grappled with several enigmas it raised. Was Akbar founding a new religion, was he disillusioned with Islam in general or only the ulema class, or was he possibly claiming prophethood for himself?



Interestingly, only two contemporary sources charged Akbar with deviation from Islam. The first was Akbar's staunch critic, Abdul Qadir Badauni, and the second, the Jesuit priests who had resided at Akbar's court for several years and entertained hopes of converting him to Christianity. But Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the leading revivalist thinker of the age, who often criticised the Emperor for failing in his duties as a Muslim ruler, never accused him of apostasy.

On the whole, it would perhaps be appropriate to view the *Din-i-Ilahi* as an order of people with a motto of peace with all (*suleh kul*), rather than as an eclectic religion. Akbar's Hindu nobles preferred to remain aloof, with only Birbal consenting to become a member. Raja Todar Mal, Raja Bhagwan Das and Raja Man Singh all declined to be associated with it.

### Composition of the Nobility

Notwithstanding the articulation of a new imperial ideology, power remained predominantly in the hands of an alien elite. Seventy percent of the Mughal officers were foreigners, mainly Iranis from Persia and Turanis from Central Asia. They belonged to families that had migrated to India with Humayun or had arrived after Akbar's accession.

During the course of Akbar's rule, only twenty-one Hindus were recruited into the ranks of the upper nobility. Of these, the overwhelming majority (seventeen) were Rajputs. The other four included in this privileged circle were Birbal, Todar Mal, his son, and another Khattri.

There were thirty-seven Hindus in the lower ranks of the nobility, of whom thirty were Rajputs. The question naturally arises as to why Rajputs were specially targeted for recruitment. There are principally two explanations for this imperial strategy. Rajputs were the sword-arm of Hindu society. By winning them over, Akbar not only gained access to their military resources, but also strengthened his own position vis-à-vis the foreign Muslim nobles. As some historians have cogently argued, Akbar could, whenever he so needed, use the Rajputs as a counter-weight to his immigrant followers. Indian Muslims, to whom the Emperor also gave partial representation, could serve a similar purpose.

The Rajput compulsions in consenting to this arrangement were hardly less practical. According to some scholars, eight hundred years of resistance had exhausted them. According to others, Akbar was not simply interested in balancing the various ethnic and factional groups within his empire. He wanted to create a new, broader and more neutral identity, that of the imperial official. He wished the nobles to perceive themselves as Mughal servants, rather than as racial and religious groups. To what extent the Emperor actually succeeded in submerging particularistic identities remains an open question.

Hindus, of course, were present in large numbers in clerical posts in the administrative system, especially in the fiscal departments.



### The Administrative Structure

Akbar reorganised the administrative machinery to safeguard and enhance his own position as well as to introduce greater efficiency in his government. After the dismissal of Bairam Khan, he did away with the institution of the all-powerful *wazir*, distributed the functions of that office among several officers and often kept the post vacant. The jurisdiction of his central ministers was restricted and clearly defined to forestall the possibility of concentration of power in hands other than those of the Emperor. Thus, the *diwan* was responsible only for the functioning of the finance ministry, while the *mir bakshi* was accountable for the military department. The *sadr us-sadur* looked after ecclesiastical affairs, while the *mir saman* was in-charge of the supply department.

Akbar divided his empire into twelve provinces (*subas*), endowing each with a *diwan*, *bakshi*, *sadr* and *qazi* who replicated the functions of their central government counterparts. The provinces were further sub-divided into *sarkars* and *parganas* where, too, effective checks and balances were enforced between the various government officials.

### Mansabdari System

Among Akbar's innovative measures was the creation of the mansabdari system incorporating the institutions of army, nobility and civil service. After several years of experimentation, Akbar gave final form to the mansabdari system in the twentieth year of his reign.

In keeping with the martial nature of the Mughal state, the administrative machinery was now organised on a military basis, and even officers performing civil duties were given military ranks. These were indicated by the mansabs given to them.

The Mughal mansab was dual in nature, consisting of two numbers, known as the *zat* and *sawar*. A mansabdar, for example, could be given the rank of 1000/1000; the first figure always indicating his *zat* rank, the second his *sawar*. The *zat* was a personal rank indicating the position and status of the mansabdar. The pay he received for the *zat* rank was meant to meet his personal expenses.

*Sawar* was the cavalry or military rank. It indicated the military obligations of the mansabdar, that is, the number of horsemen and horses he was to maintain for the state. Generally, for every unit of ten men, the mansabdar was required to have twenty horses. The payment of horses varied according to their breed, the Iraqi breed getting more than the Turki or Tazi. To ensure that quality horsemen and horses were maintained by the mansabdars, Akbar ordered that a descriptive roll (*chehra*) be maintained of the soldiers and that horses that passed muster be branded (*dagh*) with imperial marks. The mansabdars were paid a separate salary to meet their *sawar* obligations. The salary they received for the *sawar* rank was usually greater than what they received for their *zat* rank. This was because while the *zat* salary was for personal



expenses, the *sawar* salary was to meet the costs of the troops, horses and equipment that the mansabdar had to maintain. Mansabdars were generally paid by assignments of land (*jagirs*) and were hence also known as *jagirdars* (holders of *jagirs*). Some mansabdars were paid in cash.

While discussing the mansabdari system, it bears recalling that cavalry constituted the backbone of the Mughal army. The primary duty of the mansabdar was to maintain cavalry contingents for the state. According to calculations by modern historians, in 1595, 1,823 mansabdars commanded a minimum cavalry of 1,41,053, with horses and equipment.

During the reign of Akbar, the average pay of a trooper per annum has been estimated at 9,600 *dams*, which remained unchanged in Jahangir's times. Under Shah Jahan, this was reduced to 8,800 *dams* in 1630 and further to 8,000 *dams* in 1638-39. The latter figure remained in force in Aurangzeb's reign. According to a reference in the *Akbar Nama*, the Rajput contingents appear to have received a differential and lower rate of payment.

#### Reforms in Mansabdari

The mansabdari system lost much of its efficiency under Akbar's successors, necessitating the introduction of a series of corrective measures. An important change in Jahangir's reign was the introduction of the *du-aspa-sih-aspa* rank. This was made part of the *sawar* rank and was usually bestowed as a

sign of royal favour. Under the *du-aspa-sih-aspa* rank, the mansabdar's *sawar* obligations and the payment made for them were both doubled.

Shah Jahan found on his accession that many mansabdars no longer kept their full contingents, but drew the full *sawar* rank pay. He therefore reduced the *zat* salaries and the pay of the troopers, and passed the rule of one-third, one-fourth and one-fifth. According to this rule, when a mansabdar served in a province in which his *jagir* was located, he had to maintain a contingent equal to one-third of his *sawar* rank. If his *jagir* and posting were in different areas, his contingent had to be one-fourth of his *sawar* rank. Mansabdars serving in the Balkh-Badakshan campaign were required to meet only one-fifth of their *sawar* obligations.

Shah Jahan also instituted the month scales. This was necessitated by the gap between the official estimate of the income of a *jagir* (the *jama*) and the actual amount collected (*hasil*). For instance, in the last years of Shah Jahan's reign, the *hasil* of the Mughal Deccan was only one-fourth the *jama*. The reduction in salary was accompanied by a corresponding decrease in *sawar* obligations. Thus, if a mansabdar was required to maintain 1000 troopers but was actually paid for only nine months of the year, his obligations would be scaled down to 750 troopers and 1,650 horses.

The mansabdari system was the mechanism by which the Mughals sought to administer India more firmly



than ever in the past. Mansabdars did not contribute to the formulation of imperial policy, but only helped to ensure its implementation..

### Salary Bill of Mansabdars

Scholars who have examined the salary bill of the mansabdars for the year 1595-96, point out that as much as eighty-two percent of the net revenue resources of the empire were allocated to a mere 1,671 persons.

The revenues of the Mughal state towards the end of Akbar's reign have been estimated at 99 million silver rupees per annum. Of this, 81 million rupees were assigned to the mansabdars who utilised about 51 million rupees or roughly fifty-two percent of the total *jama* to support their military contingents. Akbar himself spent almost nine per cent of the total *jama* of the empire on his personal military establishment.

Two disturbing conclusions flow from these statistics. The first and most obvious is the abnormally elitist nature of the Mughal state. The second is its overwhelmingly militaristic character. It devoured huge monies to raise and maintain a gigantic standing army in an age frequently depicted as a time of peace and stability. Given that India was almost free from the scourge of foreign invasions during Mughal times, it is apparent that this awesome military apparatus was directed towards conquering and re-conquering the same old territories and restive peoples.

### Land Grants

Apart from granting land assignments to mansabdars in lieu of pay, the Mughal state also gave tax-free land grants to religious scholars and divines. In Akbar's time such grants (called *suryurhal* or *madad-i-maash*) totalled about three per cent of the *jama*. The overwhelming majority of the beneficiaries of such grants were Muslims. Another category of grants, known as *waqf*, were made to institutions for the upkeep of religious shrines, tombs and *madarsas* (religious schools).

### Land Revenue and Methods of Assessment

Scholars have provided detailed information on the various methods and rates of assessment current in Mughal India.

The method most favourable to peasants was the *batai* or crop-sharing, which distributed the risks of cultivation between the cultivator and the state. Under this method, the crop was divided between the peasant and the state either when it was standing in the field, or after it had been cut, or when it was on the threshing floor.

In the *hast-o-bud* system, officials inspected the village, estimated the total produce and fixed the revenue demand. Sometimes the number of ploughs was taken into account to assess the total produce of the area.

Under the *kankut* system, the land was first measured and the yield per unit for each crop estimated. This was then applied to the area under



cultivation. In the *nasaq* system, previous assessments were used for calculating the revenue due to the state.

The *zabt* system enforced by Sher Shah from Lahore to Awadh was initially adopted by Akbar as well. On the basis of the prices prevalent in each region, Akbar sanctioned the rates by which the tax in kind could be converted into cash rates (called *dasturs*). At this time, there was only one crop rate based on average yield (*rai*) and one price schedule for the region from Lahore to Awadh. This disregarded the wide disparity in local productivity and prices.

A fresh *jama* was prepared in the eleventh year of Akbar's reign (1566-67) by two senior revenue officials, Muzaffar Khan and Todar Mal, based on information supplied by the *qanungos*. But the figures provided by the *qanungos* were found to be unreliable. The problem of annually commuting the *rai* into cash rates also remained.

As a solution to these problems, the *Jama-i-dah-sala* (*jama* of ten years) was compiled in the twenty-fourth regnal year (1579-80). To begin with, a new *rai* was prepared for every locality, based on the actual rates of harvest of the previous ten years, in order to determine the average produce. The cash rates of the previous ten years were also tabulated and final *dasturs* composed on the basis of the average price. The final *dasturs* eliminated the need for annual royal intervention and also greatly reduced the uncertainties in levying the yearly revenue demand.

Among the principal drawbacks of the *Jama-i-dah-salat*, however, was that the peasants were left to bear all the risks of cultivation.

### Magnitude of Revenue Demand

In Akbar's time, the land revenue differed from area to area. In Kashmir, where two-thirds of the crop was being extracted from the peasants, the state claim was reduced to half the produce by the Emperor.

In Sind as well, the demand was fifty percent of the produce, whereas in the desert regions of Ajmer suba, it varied from one-seventh to one-eighth of the harvest. The Dutch factor, Geleynssen, found in Gujarat in 1629 that the cultivators had to surrender three-fourths of their produce.

In Aurangzeb's reign, records from the Lahore region show that fifty percent of the wheat and barley crop was appropriated by the state under both the *kankut* and crop-sharing systems. Scholars have drawn attention to a 1665 *farman* which reveals that some *jagirdars* in Gujarat were attempting to extract from the peasants more than the whole produce in revenue by the simple device of declaring the yield to be two and a half times more than what it actually was!

### Rural Taxes other than Land Revenue

Apart from the high revenue demand, the peasants had to pay a number of taxes collectively known as *wujihat*. These included taxes on cattle, grazing animals, orchards and markets, in addition to which was the menace of extortions by revenue officials.



Though revenue officials were repeatedly warned against making illicit demands on the peasantry, the practice was rampant. The strain it imposed on the peasants can be gauged from a complaint by the inhabitants of a village that the illegal demands of revenue officials totalled to nearly one-third of the *jama* of the village. The *jaziya* imposed by Emperor Aurangzeb at four percent of the *jama*, added to the financial strain of the Hindus.

Scholars have pointed out that in many cases the total tax liability of the peasants became so enormous that they were forced to sell their wives, children and cattle to meet the state demand. A number of foreign travellers have attested to the plight of the peasants in Mughal India. The Jesuit priest Jeronim Xavier observed that in Gujarat and Kashmir, Mughal rule had resulted in an immense increase in the

misery of the people. Even in Akbar's time, the "Karori experiment" of 1574 (which aimed at the measurement of all land under cultivation) was said to have caused tremendous suffering to the peasants.

In Jahangir's reign, according to one account, the peasants were "cruelly and pitilessly oppressed." Under Shah Jahan too, there are reports of "the cruelty of ill-fated officials" and "the oppression and neglect of the provincial governors."

The French traveller, Bernier, noted in Aurangzeb's reign, that "a considerable portion of the good land remains untilled from the want of peasants," many of whom "perish in consequence of the bad treatment they receive from the Governors," or "abandon the country."

Many peasants revolted, the unifying bonds of caste and religion greatly extending the scope of such uprisings.

### Exercises

1. Give an account of Akbar's campaigns against the Rajput states.
2. Describe the nature of Akbar's forays in the Deccan.
3. Enunciate the dynastic ideology that Abul Fazl created for his sovereign.
4. Discuss the nature of the *Din-i-Ilahi*. Can it be regarded as a new religion?
5. Give an account of the composition of the nobility under Akbar.
6. What did *Zat* and *Sawar* rank signify in the mansabdari system?
7. What were the reforms introduced in the mansabdari system under Akbar's successors?
8. What percentage of the state income was disbursed among the mansabdars? Can the Mughal state be described as militaristic in character?
9. Describe the main features of the *Zabt* system.
10. What was the *Jama-i-dah-sala*?



11. Write short notes on:

- a) *Batal*
- b) *hast-o-bud*
- c) *kankut*
- d) *nasq*

12. On a map of India, mark the extent of the Mughal empire at the time of the death of Akbar.

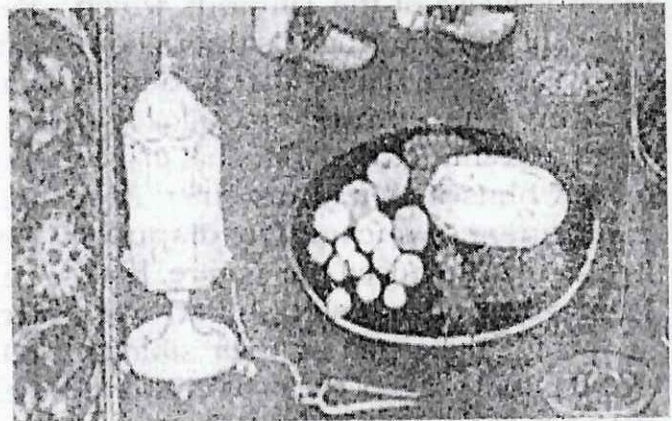
13. State whether the following are true or false:

- a) Abdul Rahim Khan Khana was Bairam Khan's son.
- b) Baz Bahadur was the ruler of Gondwana.
- c) The tomb of Salim Chishti was located at Ajmer.
- d) Badauni was an admirer of Akbar.
- e) Bernier was a French traveller.



# CHAPTER 15

## CONSOLIDATION OF MUGHAL RULE







### Jahangir (1605-1627)

**THE** issue of succession was one of the vexed legacies of the Timurids which was to plague the Mughals throughout their rule. The Timurid tradition of dividing the empire among royal offsprings entitled every Mughal prince to view himself as a future ruler. As a consequence, succession disputes frequently convulsed the empire. Both Humayun and his son, Akbar, were seriously challenged by their siblings in the initial years of their rule, and the problem dogged the Mughal Empire in subsequent centuries as well.

In addition to brothers and half brothers, offsprings were also a potential threat. As early as 1591, Akbar, for instance, suspected his son Prince Salim (the future Jahangir) of attempting to poison him. By the end of the century, differences between the two had become so acute that Salim formally rebelled, set up an independent court at Allahabad, and assumed the imperial title of Shah.

In 1605, when it became obvious that Akbar's end was near, Prince Salim was in turn faced with an attempted coup by his eldest son, Prince Khusrau, who was aided and abetted by Raja Man Singh Kachhwaha and Mirza Aziz Koka (whose daughter was married to the Prince). The failure of the coup leaders to win over other leading nobles, combined with the active assistance rendered by the Sayyids of Barha to Salim, however, ensured that he was duly coronated successor to Akbar.

However, this did not end the challenge to Jahangir from within the royal family. In April 1606, after six months of semi-confinement at Agra Fort, Prince Khusrau fled to Punjab and raised the banner of revolt against his father. He was, however, routed in his encounter with the imperial forces and captured along with his leading followers. Thereupon, the furious Emperor ordered that the principal supporters of the prince be impaled in front of him, but even this severe retribution did not deter Khusrau, who next devised a plot to kill his father. Incensed, Jahangir commanded that his son be blinded, thus thwarting an immediate challenge to his rule.

### Conquests: Troubled Legacy and Achievements

The Mughal Empire under Jahangir remained devoted to conquest and expansion. Mewar, which had hitherto resisted Mughal rule, presented an immediate arena of contest. Jahangir's first operation against the state ended in failure, as did his nearly annual





*Jahangir holding his father, Akbar's portrait*

subsequent campaigns. Finally, in 1613, the Emperor positioned himself at Ajmer to personally supervise operations then entrusted to his son, Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan). Confronted with an effective deployment of the imperial cavalry, the Rana, Amar Singh, surrendered in person to the Mughal prince, thus temporarily ending a sterling saga of defiance of Muslim rule. The Rana requested exemption from personal appearance at the imperial durbar, where he be represented by his son,

Karan, an arrangement to which the Mughals acquiesced. Mewar's capitulation had a demonstrative effect on several other resistant powers, which began to appreciate the difficulty of holding out indefinitely.

In the north-east, long years of war had finally worn out the Afghans, but in Assam, the martial Ahoms clashed with the Mughals almost every year during the reign of Jahangir. Their military vigour, surprise attacks, and effective use of river boats combined to make them deadly foes of the Mughals and prevent an early resolution of the contest.

Most of the small Rajput domains in the Himalayan foothills had been forced to accept Mughal suzerainty during the reign of Akbar. In return for the right to retain their kingdoms, they had agreed to pay an annual tribute, serve at the Emperor's court, and provide daughters in marriage to the imperial family. Akbar had also stationed *faujdars* in the area to keep a watch on these kingdoms. In Jahangir's time, however, the Raja of Kangra felt confident enough to take on the Mughals. The imperial forces took almost three years to subjugate this tiny kingdom. Jahangir, thereby, became the first Muslim ruler to conquer Kangra and himself went there in 1620 to celebrate the Mughal accomplishment. He killed a bullock within the fort precincts and constructed a mosque in the area.

In the north-west, the Mughals shared an ambivalent relationship with the Safavid kingdom of Persia. The





*Meeting of Jahangir with the Persian King, Shah Abbas (miniature Mughal painting)*

Persians regarded themselves culturally superior and two Persian rulers had even asked Babur and Humayun to publicly show deference to Shi'i Islam. Nonetheless, the Mughals and the Safavids routinely exchanged embassies, letters, and gifts. Other than the conflict over Qandhar, they never engaged in war with each other. Akbar had taken possession of Qandhar in 1595. A Safavid attempt to reoccupy it in the early years of Jahangir's reign ended in failure, but Jahangir's illness in 1622 enabled the Persians to win back Qandhar.

### The Deccan

The Deccan was another vexatious frontier for the Mughals. At the time of Akbar's death, the Mughals were in possession of Khandesh, Berar and the northern part of Ahmadnagar. However, opposition in Ahmadnagar revived under the leadership of Malik Ambar, forcing Jahangir to redeploy Mughal forces against that state. After a decade of warfare, the Mughals finally overwhelmed Ahmadnagar in 1616. Malik Ambar, however, managed to escape to continue the struggle against the Mughals.

Jahangir directed Prince Khurram to assume command of the Deccan operations. Khurram won a major battle against Malik Ambar, who consented to hand over Berar and Ahmadnagar to the Mughals.

However, Malik Ambar soon reneged on his agreement and asked Bijapur and Golconda to assist him in his anti-Mughal drive. Khurram re-established Mughal control over Ahmadnagar and also obliged Bijapur and Golconda to pay heavy fines. The Deccan now entered its familiar political trajectory of tactical submissions and recurrent revolts. The Marathas were important participants in these events.

### The Sikhs

Meanwhile, a fresh battleground was being readied in Punjab. It is difficult to comprehend the reasons for Jahangir's animosity to the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjun. The Sikhs were most peace loving religious people and posed no threat to the Mughal state.



Perhaps Jahangir was suspicious of native religious leaders with large popular followings.

He hinted as much in his memoirs, the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. "In Goindwal, which is on the river Biyah (Beas)," he wrote, "there was a Hindu named Arjun, in the garments of sainthood and sanctity, so much so that he had captivated many of the simple-hearted of the Hindus, and even of the ignorant and foolish followers of Islam, by his ways and manners, and they had loudly sounded the drum of his holiness. They called him Guru and from all sides... people crowded to worship and manifest complete faith in him..."

An added provocation was that Prince Khusrau, during his ill-fated rebellion against Jahangir, had briefly met the Guru at Goindwal, where Guru Arjun had blessed him by putting a saffron mark on his forehead. The Emperor ordered the seizure of the Guru's properties and children and his execution, making him the first of the Sikh Gurus to be so martyred at the hands of the Mughals.

Guru Arjun's young son and successor, Hargobind, reacted to this patently unjust turn of events by paying attention to temporal as well as spiritual affairs. His two swords, Piri and Miri, symbolised the complementarity of spiritual and temporal authority. He constructed the Akal Takht at the Golden Temple and held court there to conduct secular matters. He encouraged his followers to engage in martial activities and built the

fort of Lohgarh for defensive purposes. These measures aroused the suspicion of the Mughal officers who reported the matter to the Emperor. Enraged, Jahangir had the Guru imprisoned at Gwalior fort for two years. Upon his release, Guru Hargobind shifted his base to the Himalayan foothills.

### Religious Disposition

It is not easy to form a proper assessment of Jahangir's religious views. He stated in his autobiography that he deeply respected Muslim saints and divines. He viewed participation in Hindu festivals as politically expedient.

In 1613, Jahangir began a three-year stay at Ajmer to direct operations against Amar Singh, the Rana of Mewar. During this time, he visited the dargah of Muinuddin Chishti nine times, making generous donations on each occasion. He also began wearing pearl earrings as a mark of his devotion to the Chishti saint, a practice quickly adopted by many of his courtiers.

Jahangir celebrated his victory over the Rana by hunting on the banks of the sacred tank at Pushkar, near Ajmer, violating local tradition. He had the image of Vishnu in his Varaha incarnation destroyed and thrown into the tank. As the temple was said to belong to the Rana's uncle, some modern historians attribute political rather than religious motives to this act. Jahangir also built a hunting palace on the banks of the Pushkar tank, thus registering Mughal presence in one of the holiest Hindu *teerthas*.



At the same time, however, Jahangir was attracted to the great Vaishnava ascetic, Gosain Jadrup. Jahangir called on the sage several times after the latter declined the imperial invitation to visit the Mughal court. Jahangir visited him first in Ujjain and then again a few years later when he met the saint twice within one week. He wrote of that occasion: "On Monday, the twelfth, my desire to see Gosain Jadrup again increased and hastening to his hut, without ceremony, I enjoyed his society. Sublime words were spoken between us. God Almighty has granted him an unusual grace, a lofty understanding, and excellent nature and sharp intellectual powers, with a God-given knowledge and a heart free from the attachments of the world, so that putting behind his back to the world and all that is in it, he sits content in the corner of solitude and without wants."

The other religious figure of note whom Jahangir is on record as having interacted with was Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a leading light of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. Sirhindi had been critical of Akbar's policies, which he felt had diluted the Islamic profile of the government. He hoped that Jahangir would reverse his father's misguided policies. Sirhindi regarded the execution of the Sikh Guru by Jahangir as a notable event.

Many learned Muslims shared Sirhindi's distrust of Akbar's policies. But they rejected his claim to be a manifestation of the Four Pious Caliphs.

Sirhindi was summoned by the Emperor and imprisoned. On the basis

of available evidence, it is difficult to conclusively establish the reasons for his confinement. Jahangir himself noted that he was offended by Sirhindi's claim to parity with the Four Pious Caliphs. On his release from prison a year later, however, the Emperor presented Sirhindi with a robe of honour, a gift of a thousand rupees, and the choice of staying on at the imperial court or retiring to his native Sirhind. Sirhindi chose the former option, and resided at the imperial camp for nearly three years. Some of the sermons he delivered were heard by the Emperor.

#### Nur Jahan

In 1611, a significant phase in the Emperor's life commenced with his marriage to an Iranian widow, Mehrunissa, the daughter of his nobleman, Itimad-ud-Daulah. The new queen soon became the favourite of the Emperors' wives, and was given the title, Nur Jahan (Light of the World).

According to several accounts, Nur Jahan acquired a tremendous hold over the Emperor and emerged as a factor in imperial politics. Her father was made the imperial diwan, while her brother, Asaf Khan, became a leading mansabdar. The vaulting position of the Empress's family was further cemented by the marriage of Asaf Khan's daughter, Arjumand Banu (the future Mumtaz Mahal), with Jahangir's second son and heir-apparent, Prince Khurram, in 1612.

Nur Jahan, her father, brother and Prince Khurram emerged as a



formidable power bloc, an alliance that lasted for at least a decade. But the group disintegrated when the Emperor fell ill and Nur Jahan came to the helm and clashed with Prince Khurram. Nur Jahan now had her daughter from her previous marriage married to Jahangir's youngest son, Prince Shahryar, thus creating a claimant to the throne more amenable to her control.

#### Succession

In 1621, when Prince Khurram heard that the Emperor was critically ill, he ordered the secret murder of his elder brother, the blinded Prince Khusrau. Nur Jahan's machinations on behalf of her son-in-law, Prince Shahryar, goaded Prince Khurram into open revolt. Though defeated by Jahangir's army, Khurram remained in rebellion, fleeing from one part of the empire to another in search of allies. Ultimately, he agreed to a truce under which he remained governor of the Deccan provinces and sent two of his sons, Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb, as hostages to his father's court.

Jahangir died in 1627, and Khurram was able to mount the throne, partly due to the deft manoeuvrings of his father-in-law, Asaf Khan. Immediately after his accession, Shah Jahan ordered the execution of his brother, Prince Shahryar; the two sons of his brother, Prince Khusrau; and the two sons of Jahangir's brother, Prince Daniyal.

#### Shah Jahan (1628-1658)

The kingdom founded by Babur, nurtured by Akbar, consolidated by Jahangir, reached its zenith under Shah Jahan. Unmatched in military might, territorial extent and wealth, it was truly a pre-eminent power, an empire by every definition of the term.

Stretching from Sind to Sylhet and from Balkh to the Deccan, its annual assessed revenues stood at a mind-boggling 8,800 millions *dams*, up from 7,000 million *dams*, two decades earlier under Jahangir and 4,061 million *dams* in the fortieth year of Akbar's reign. The imperial reserves were estimated at 95 million rupees, half in coin, the rest in bullion, precious stones, and other valuables. As against the 1,47,000-plus cavalymen in the year 1595-96 of Akbar's reign, the total number of armed horsemen in Shah Jahan's empire was an impressive 2,00,000.

The burgeoning imperial revenues led to a frenzied construction of state monuments, buildings so elegant and refined that Shah Jahan is even now mainly remembered for them. The new capital city of Shahjahanabad, the Taj Mahal, the all-marble structures at Agra Fort, continue to evoke appreciation for their aesthetic appearance and fine workmanship. It has been calculated that altogether Shah Jahan spent at least 28.9 million rupees on his building activities in the course of his three decade long reign. The magnificence of his Peacock Throne continued to be recalled long after it was carried away by Nadir Shah.



### Conquests

Shah Jahan's reign witnessed an intensification of Mughal rule even in areas that had formally accepted it. The Bundela Rajputs were among those who felt the tightening imperial grip. The Bundelas had established their capital at Orchha on the Betwa river in the early sixteenth century. Thereafter, other branches of the clan also settled in the region and the area became known after them as Bundelkhand. Akbar had, however, succeeded in forcing the ruling house to pay tribute.

A member of the Bundela clan, Bir Singh Deo, had arranged the murder of Abul Fazl at Prince Salim's request. Consequently, when Salim became Emperor, he endorsed Bir Singh's claim to the Bundela throne. Bir Singh remained on the throne for two decades, and died in the same year as Jahangir.

Bir Singh had also aided Jahangir in suppressing the revolt of his son, the future Shah Jahan. Consequently, when Bir Singh's son, Jujhar Singh, arrived at the court of Emperor Shah Jahan, an inquiry was ordered into the assets of his late father. Alarmed at this turn of events, Jujhar Singh fled to his home state with the Mughal army in hot pursuit. The imperial troops ravaged the surrounding countryside before attacking the city. Three thousand Bundela Rajputs died defending their kingdom. Jujhar Singh was obliged to pay an indemnity of 1.5 million rupees, gift fourty war elephants and cede one district to the Mughals. He and his sons were also directed to serve in the Deccan campaigns.

In 1634, Jujhar Singh again landed himself in trouble by attacking the neighbouring Gond kingdom, killing its ruler Bhim Narayan, and seizing the treasure found at Chauragarh fort. Shah Jahan immediately ordered Jujhar Singh to restore the Gond lands as well as the cache and pay a fine.

When Jujhar Singh refused to comply, Mughal troops were sent to depose him and install Devi Singh Bundela as raja instead. Jujhar Singh fled to Chanda, another Gond kingdom in central India, still beyond Mughal jurisdiction. Overtaken by Mughal troops, his principal wives were executed by their attendants to avoid the humiliation of falling into enemy hands. The remaining women in the entourage, however, were seized and sent to the Mughal harem. Two sons and one grandson were converted to Islam and one who refused to do so, slain. Jujhar Singh and his eldest son were in turn killed by a group of Gonds.

The Gond raja of Chanda was also forced to pay a huge indemnity as well as pledge to send an annual tribute. Meanwhile, an enormous booty was unearthed at Orchha. Shah Jahan himself arrived at the palace where, according to the chronicler Abdul Hamid Lahori, "the Islam-cherishing Emperor demolished the lofty and massive temple of Bir Singh Deo near his palace and erected a mosque on its site." Thus, two principal kingdoms in central India, Bundelkhand and Gondwana, experienced a heightened degree of imperial control.



Shah Jahan's endeavour to impose tributary status on the small Rajput hill state of Garhwal in the Himalayan foothills, however, proved abortive. The Mughal forces were so badly trounced that it was only twenty years later that a second expedition was launched to subdue the kingdom. That too, was a failure. The Emperor then gathered fresh troops equipped with artillery to invade the state. The Raja agreed to pay tribute and send his son to the imperial court.

In the north-east, Kuch Bihar and Kamarupa had marked the limits of the Mughal Empire. In 1636, the murder of a trader-emissary of the Mughals provoked an Ahom-Mughal war. After a bitter battle fought over land and river, the Mughals retreated in the face of stout Ahom defence. The ensuing treaty, which ensured peace in the region for the next two decades, recognised the independent status of the Ahoms.

### **The Southern Frontier**

The southern frontier was also stabilised. In 1632, Ahmadnagar was finally conquered and the Nizam Shahi ruler taken prisoner. Many Muslim members of the state's ruling class were assimilated into Mughal service, as were a few Marathas.

Shah Jahan then ordered the two remaining states of Bijapur and Golconda to accept Mughal sovereignty and pay annual tribute. The ruler of Golconda promptly acceded to these demands, but military action was needed to enforce Bijapur's compliance.

Thus, both kingdoms came within the Mughal ambit.

### **The North-West**

Like other Mughal rulers before him, Shah Jahan also aspired to recover the Timurid homelands in Central Asia from the Uzbeks. However, his unsuccessful foray in the region cost the Mughals millions of rupees and the lives of thousands of troops. At no point could the Mughals threaten the Uzbek capital or even come close to their cherished city of Samarqand.

Shah Jahan's other obsession in the north-west was the recovery of Qandhar from the Persians. Here he met with initial success. In 1638, the Persian commander of Qandhar, following differences with the Safavid ruler, Shah Safi, surrendered the fort to the Mughals and entered their service. In gratitude, Shah Jahan appointed him governor of Kashmir. Qandhar remained with the Mughals for a decade after which the new Safavid ruler, taking advantage of the Mughal failure in Central Asia, attacked Qandhar and forced the Mughals to surrender.

Three major campaigns to recover Qandhar in the next few years ended in failure. Qandhar remained with the Safavids until the dynasty itself went into decline in the eighteenth century.

Despite the fairly extensive military campaigns undertaken during his reign, Shah Jahan neglected vital aspects of his armoury. He took little interest in developing better firearms and made no investment in the science of ordnance.



### Political Culture

Shah Jahan's reign heralded a distinct departure from the more liberal times of his grandfather. In his sixth regnal year in 1633, Shah Jahan began prohibiting the repair of shrines. When informed that the Hindus wished to complete the construction of several unfinished temples in Banaras, the Emperor ordered the demolition of new places of worship in the city. Prominent Hindu temples encountered during military expeditions met a similar fate.

The Emperor continued the annual state sponsorship of pilgrims to Mecca. Every year, two shiploads set sail for that city at state expense, besides which, nine missions were sent to Mecca and Medina laden with goods to be sold for the benefit of the poor there. The Sharif of Mecca in turn sent a goodwill mission to the Mughal court. The head of the embassy, Shaikh Abdus Samad, was subsequently appointed chief judge of the Mughal army.

The shift in imperial attitude was reflective of the growing ascendancy of revivalist forces within the wider Muslim community. Several Sufi orders, principally the Naqshbandis, advocated greater adherence to the Quran and Sharia.

### The Sikhs

Like his father, Shah Jahan also clashed with the Sikhs. For reasons not clear, he ordered Mughal troops to besiege Guru Hargobind's headquarters at Ramdasapur (present Amritsar). It appears that Shah Jahan was unhappy

because of the ever increasing number of the Guru's followers resulting in a clash between the Mughals and the Sikhs.

The Sikhs repulsed the Mughal attack, but the Guru shifted his residence to Kartarpur in the Jalandhar Doab. He was harassed by Mughal forces there as well, and again emerged victorious. Convinced that the Mughals would continue to create unnecessary problems, he left Amritsar to reside in the territory of a Rajput vassal of the Mughals in Nalagarh where he founded a new town called Keeratpur. He lived there until his death in 1644, carrying out his martial exercises and maintaining a contingent of horses, horsemen and matchlockmen. He continued to attract a large number of followers. Khattris and Jats comprised a large section of his devotees. Guru Hargobind nominated Har Rai, a young boy of fourteen, as his successor.

### Nobility under Shah Jahan

The mid-seventeenth century chronicler, Abdul Hamid Lahori, has provided a list of mansabdars of 500 *zat* and above in the year 1647-48 of Shah Jahan's reign. Scholars who have examined the list have come to interesting conclusions about the composition of the ruling class under Shah Jahan.

The most remarkable feature that comes to light is the exceptional increase in the number of mansabdars from Akbar's time. From 283 at the end of Akbar's reign, the figure had jumped to 445 barely four decades later. As in the past, mansabdars remained the most powerful and privileged group in



the empire, with those at the top echelons appropriating the lion's share of state resources.

The four sons of Emperor Shah Jahan (Dara, Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad) were together allotted over eight per cent of the assessed imperial revenue. Overall, as much as 37.6 per cent of the assessed annual revenues of the empire were disbursed among just 73 imperial officers. Altogether, the 445 mansabdars consumed more than three-fourths of the revenues of the state.

Despite controlling so much wealth, mansabdars did little to promote economic growth. The increase in the number of large towns in Mughal India was not a true indicator of the health of the economy. As scholars have pointed out, this growth was parasitical. Towns grew to meet the needs of the large numbers of troops and attendants of the nobles and to produce the luxury items desired by the Mughal ruling class. Though the latter may have diverted a part of their fortunes in usury and commerce, they more often tended to misuse their office to monopolise trade, and even the labour of artisans.

In terms of religious and racial break up, the overwhelming majority of mansabdars (almost four-fifths) were Muslims, Hindus accounting for the remaining one-fifth. Again, the bulk of the Hindu nobility comprised of Rajputs.

As in the past, Iranis and Turanis dominated the nobility, jointly comprising roughly fifty per cent of the top imperial officials. In contrast to the negligible Afghan representation under

Akbar, they now constituted a little over five per cent of the Mughal officers. The Indian Muslim component was restricted to slightly less than fifteen per cent.

The Deccani Muslims, who had previously served the southern sultans, were a new group of entrants into the Mughal nobility. Eight of them are mentioned in the list. Ten Marathas were also accommodated, a reflection of their growing political clout. There were no Marathas in Akbar's nobility and only one in Jahangir's.

#### War of Succession

In the closing years of Shah Jahan's reign, the Mughal Empire was rent by dissensions within the imperial family. The principal protagonists were two royal princes, Dara Shukoh, the heir-apparent, and Aurangzeb, the Emperor's third son.

While personal ambitions undoubtedly dictated the actions of the princes, it is indisputable that they held varying viewpoints on matters of crucial importance for the imperial polity. What further aggravated the situation and in fact strengthened the position of Aurangzeb was the growing prominence of revivalist movements within the Islamic community.

In this atmosphere, Dara's apparently less than conformist behaviour earned him the ire of his co-religionists. Dara's attempt to understand the Quranic concept of *marmuz* (mysterious, symbolic) led him to study Hindu scriptures, specially the *Upanishads*. Dara reasoned that since



the Quran clearly stated that every land had been provided spiritual guidance by the Almighty, India too must have had divinely revealed scriptures. He believed that the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* belonged to that category. The Quranic concept of *marmuz*, he felt, could be understood by studying the *Upanishads*.

Consequently, assisted by Brahmin scholars, he translated fifty-two *Upanishads* into Persian, the collective work being known as the *Sirr-i-Akbar*. This impressive feat convinced him that the *Upanishads* were the original expression of the 'Oneness of God.' His arguments however found few takers within his community.

Aurangzeb, by contrast, presented himself as a strict Sunni. He was the most skilled military general and administrator, and the most astute among the royal princes. In 1652, Shah Jahan sent him to the Deccan to shore up its administration and revenues. Assisted by Murshid Quli Khan, a talented revenue officer, Aurangzeb substantially improved the outflow of resources from the Deccan.

As a consequence of the 1636 treaty with Shah Jahan, Bijapur and Golconda had secured their northern frontier from Mughal attack. This had left them free to expand southwards, mainly into Karnataka, then controlled by Telugu and Tamil *nayaks*. As a result, Bijapur had acquired control of the land between the Palar and Kaveri river, and this area became known as Bijapur Karnataka.

Golconda's march into Karnataka was led by Mir Jumla, an enormously successful first-generation Iranian immigrant. He had secured diamond mining concessions and stakes in the state's maritime trade and commerce. What is more, he managed to rise to the post of Chief Minister. He won sizeable territory for Golconda in Karnataka. This new area was called Hyderabad Karnataka after the Golconda capital of Hyderabad.

When differences with the Qutb Shah ruler of Golconda forced Mir Jumla to flee in self-defence, Aurangzeb quickly established contact with the fugitive officer. His plans for a joint invasion of Golconda with Mir Jumla were not approved by Shah Jahan, who also withdrew from a proposed invasion of Bijapur.

At this moment, Shah Jahan fell ill, triggering off a war of succession among his sons. The four contestants were all blood brothers, sons of Mumtaz Mahal, and all holding powerful positions. Dara, stationed at the court was the heir-designate; Shuja was governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; Aurangzeb was in charge of the Deccan and Murad Baksh was governor of Gujarat and Multan.

On receiving news of the Emperor's illness, Shuja declared himself Emperor and began the march towards Agra. He was, however, defeated near Varanasi by a force led by Dara's son, Sulaiman Shukoh, and Raja Jai Singh. Murad Baksh similarly crowned himself in Gujarat. Aurangzeb now established secret links with Murad and Shuja,



promising to recognise them as independent rulers of parts of the Empire. The combined troops of Aurangzeb and Murad defeated Shah Jahan's army commanded by the Marwar ruler, Jaswant Singh Rathor.

Dara, meanwhile, raised a 50,000 strong contingent to confront Aurangzeb. The two sides met at Samugarh, near Agra, where Aurangzeb triumphed. Dara fled towards Delhi and spent the next few months wandering to Lahore, Gujarat,

the Rann of Kutch, Seistan and the Bolan Pass. He was finally captured and brought before Aurangzeb who had by then crowned himself king after imprisoning his father, the Emperor Shah Jahan, and his erstwhile ally and brother, Murad. Aurangzeb ordered Dara's execution on the ground that he had been deviating from Islam. In the meantime, Shuja had died fleeing his brother after being routed in battle. Aurangzeb now crowned himself king for the second time.

### Exercises

1. Describe Jahangir's dealings with the Sikh Guru Arjun.
2. Recount the Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi episode in Jahangir's reign.
3. Give a brief account of the conquests of Shah Jahan.
4. Explain the composition of the nobility under Shah Jahan.
5. What were the issues involved in the war of succession among the sons of Shah Jahan?
6. Write short notes on Jahangir's campaigns against:
  - a) Mewar
  - b) Assam
  - c) Kangra

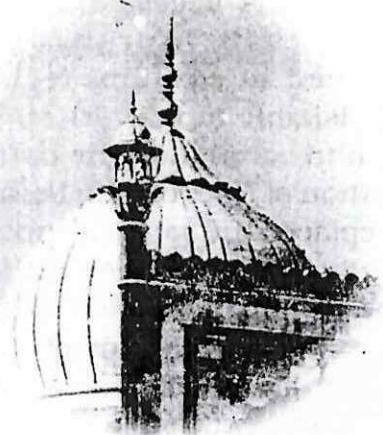


# 16 CHAPTER

## CLIMAX AND DISINTEGRATION







### Aurangzeb (1658-1707)

NEARLY three centuries after his rule, Aurangzeb remains the subject of intense academic scrutiny. A seasoned administrator and an able general, he was fired by the ambition to bring the whole of India under Mughal rule. At the same time, the Emperor was renowned for his puritanical lifestyle and religious zeal, which led him to take measures widely acknowledged as detrimental to the stability of the empire.

### Conquests

The imperfect integration of several parts of the sub-continent with the Mughal Empire necessitated repeated expeditions to conquer the same regions. Aurangzeb's reign was no exception to this trend.

Taking advantage of the political uncertainty during the war of succession, several rulers in the north-east had rebelled against imperial control. Prem Narayan of Kuch Bihar had cast aside the Mughal yoke, while Jayadhwaj, the Ahom ruler, had

invaded the Mughal district of Kamarupa.

Upon assuming the throne, Aurangzeb deputed Mir Jumla to establish order in the region. Within one year, Mir Jumla restored Mughal authority in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, whereafter he decided to wage "a holy war with the infidels of Assam." Assisted by a well-equipped army he marched to Kuch Bihar and annexed the kingdom, changing its name to Alamgir Nagar. The raja's son, who converted to Islam, joined the Mughals.

The Mughal army then marched towards Kamarupa and despite Ahom resistance re-occupied Gauhati and Garghaon. The Ahoms, however, kept up their attacks, cutting off the supply lines of the Mughal troops and forcing them to endure severe hardships. Finally, in 1663, the Ahoms agreed to a settlement whereby the Ahom ruler became a Mughal vassal, agreed to send a daughter in marriage to the Mughal court and cede considerable territory. But after Mir Jumla's death in 1663, successive Mughal governors were unable to consolidate Mughal hold on the Brahmaputra valley, and both Gauhati and Kamarupa were lost to the empire.

The Mughals were more successful against the Maghs of Arakan on the east coast of the Bay of Bengal. The Magh headquarter was annexed and renamed Islamabad by the new Mughal governor. Another trouble spot was Palamau, situated between Chhota Nagpur and the hills of central India, and inhabited by the tribal Cheros. The



Cheros had greatly extended their domains to the chagrin of the Mughals. Aurangzeb ordered the annexation of their kingdom in 1661.

The north-eastern frontier, however, continued to simmer. In 1682, Gadadhar Singh, the new Ahom king, forced the Mughals to retreat to the Manas river in the battle of Itakhuli. This remained the boundary between the Ahoms and the Mughals till the British occupation of the area. The ruler and later his son, Rudra Singh (1696-1714), patrons of Shakta Hinduism, channelised their energies in consolidating their hold over their territory. The Ahom kingdom became so strong that it even contemplated an invasion of Bengal towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign.

One of Aurangzeb's last acts in the east was the appointment in 1701 of a convert to Islam as chief financial officer in Bengal. Kartalab Khan soon restored imperial revenue collections in the province and transmitted the surplus income to the Emperor in the south, to sustain the campaigns there.

The north-west, an area of special concern to the Mughals, also remained disturbed. Its inhabitants were divided into two main groups – the Pathans and the Tajiks. The Pathans consisted of numerous tribes like the Yusufzais, Afridis and Wazirs. In 1667, the Yusufzais revolted against the Mughals. The Afridis followed in 1672. The insurrection assumed such serious proportions that Aurangzeb himself had to march to the region.

### Political Ideology

Soon after his accession, it became evident that Aurangzeb was determined to cast his regime in a strictly Islamic mould. In 1659, after his second coronation, he banned the celebration of Nauroz, the Persian new year; replaced the solar calendar by the lunar *hijra*; dismissed court musicians and royal painters; banned the drinking of wine and the use of opium; and appointed *muhtasibs* (court censors) from among the ulema to enforce Sharia injunctions.

Between 1659 and 1670, the Emperor issued several ordinances, which intensified the trend towards Islamisation. Akbar's practice of giving *darshan* to his subjects from a balcony (*jharoka-darshan*) was abandoned, as was the ceremony of weighing the Emperor on his birthday. The pilgrimage tax levied on Hindus travelling to their *teerthas*, abolished by Akbar, was reinstated. In 1665, the Emperor ordered Muslims to pay an internal customs duty of 2.5 per cent as against 5 per cent for Hindus.

In his *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, the Mughal historian Khafi Khan recorded that provincial governors and revenue officers were ordered to dismiss Hindu officials and appoint Muslims in their stead. The Emperor was particularly keen to reserve the posts of *peshkars* and *karoris* for Muslims. It is another matter that the order was not fully enforced.

In his personal life as well, the Emperor was moving towards greater religiosity. The medieval chronicler,



Saqi Mustaid Khan, vividly describes the monarch's piety: "(Aurangzeb) used to send large amounts of money, for some years annually, at others once in two or three years, to the pious men living in retreat in those Holy Cities, and a large number of men in those Holy Places were permanently employed by him on daily stipends to act as his deputies in walking round the Ka'ba bowing to the Prophet's tomb, reading the two copies of the Quran written by this pious Emperor with his own hand and presented to Medina."

To refurbish Muslim society on more strictly Islamic lines, Aurangzeb ordered the compilation of judgements on Islamic law. He hoped this would help the Muslim public become familiar with correct Islamic practices. The compendium, called *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*, gained wide acceptance in the Islamic world as a guide to right action for orthodox Muslims.

In 1669, the Emperor ordered the destruction of all temples recently built or repaired. Temples in Mathura and Banaras became special targets of attack. In Mathura, the famous Keshava Rai temple built by Bir Singh Bundela at a cost of over three million rupees was ravaged. A Mughal newsletter dated January 1670 stated, "in the month of *Ramadan*, the religious-minded emperor ordered the demolition of the Hindu temple at Mathura known as the Dera of Keshav Rai. His officers accomplished it in a short time. A grand mosque was built on its site at a vast expenditure." The richly bejewelled idols were buried

under the steps of Jahan Ara's mosque at Agra.

The Vishwanath temple at Banaras was similarly destroyed and a mosque erected in its place. The French traveller, Tavernier's description of the temple prior to its destruction is a unique historical record. He has also provided a moving account of the young princes receiving knowledge from brahmin teachers in a college next to the temple, founded by Mirza Raja Jai Singh, a leading Rajput at Aurangzeb's court.

In 1670, the images of Lord Krishna as Govinddevji and Radha, were removed from their abode at the Govind temple in Vrindavan and taken to the ancestral land of the Kachhwahas for safe keeping.

Many temples in Orissa were likewise destroyed. During 1679-80, many old temples were desecrated in Jodhpur and Udaipur. It is said that during Aurangzeb's reign, the Rana of Mewar, fearing for the safety of an idol of Lord Krishna at Mathura, secretly carried it to Nathdwara near his capital Udaipur, where it is worshipped to this day.

Saqi Mustaid Khan records Aurangzeb's order of 1669 that all schools and temples of non-Muslims be razed. A particular instance has been reported from the town of Buriya in Sarkar Sirhind, where local officials flattened a Sikh gurudwara on imperial orders and replaced it with a mosque. The Sikhs in turn razed the mosque, an indication of the social tensions generated by the imperial orders.



Aurangzeb had shown intolerance towards Hindu sacred architecture well before he became Emperor. As governor of Gujarat, he had ordered the destruction of several such structures. In some cases, the idols were broken and the temples closed rather than demolished. After becoming Emperor, Aurangzeb learnt that new idols had been installed and worship resumed in those temples. Thereupon, he issued fresh instructions for pulling down those temples. Somnath was one of them.

Scholars have presented an interesting case study of the protests of the Hindu merchants of Surat against imperial policies. The city's *qazi* compelled several of them to convert to Islam and threatened others with similar action if they did not give him money. He also demanded payment to prevent the desecration of Hindu temples in Surat. In protest, eight thousand *Banias* migrated to neighbouring Broach, leaving their wives and children in the care of family members. Their departure adversely affected the city's commerce. The protestors returned after three months, on receiving from the Emperor "some assurance of their safety and more freedom in their religion."

In 1679 came the Emperor's most contentious decision, the reimposition of the discriminatory *jaziya* tax on Hindus. Khafi Khan has left a vivid account of the protests of the Delhi citizens over this measure. He writes, "The Hindus crowded from

the gate of the fort to the Jama Masjid in such a large number for imploring redress that the passage of the people was blocked. The money-lenders, cloth merchants and shopkeepers of the camp Urdu Bazar (Army Market) and all the artisans of the city abandoned their work and assembled on the route of the emperor.... (Aurangzeb) who was riding on an elephant, could not reach the mosque. Every moment the number of those unlucky people increased. Then he ordered that the majestic elephants should proceed against them. Some of them were killed or trampled under the elephants and horses. For some days more, they assembled in the same way and requested for remission (of the *jiziya*). At last they submitted to pay the *jiziyah*." Scholars have calculated that the *jaziya*, equivalent to one month's wages for an unskilled urban labourer, was "extremely regressive" and "bore the hardest on the poorest."

Commenting on Aurangzeb's controversial measures, Saqi Mustaid Khan stated that "the Hindus had not been degraded to such a degree in any other period." According to some modern historians, the Emperor's aim was the conversion of the Hindus. Inducements were offered to strengthen the flock of Islam, and local administrators, specially *pargana* heads and *qanungos*, were particularly pressurised to abandon their faith. The Emperor apparently believed that employees of the empire must also share its religious affiliations. In several



cases of succession disputes for hereditary local offices, the Emperor adjudicated in favour of the claimant who had converted to Islam.

The empire's growing Islamic profile enhanced the position of the ulema. Large sums of money were placed at their disposal for disbursal among the needy of the community. They also controlled the appointments of *qazis* and *maulvis*. The chief judge and the supervisor of religious charity were in constant attendance upon the Emperor, who also spent generously on the repair and maintenance of mosques.

In 1672, Aurangzeb ordered the resumption of all tax-free land grants held by Hindus. Like other partisan directives of the Emperor, this too, was not fully implemented. But it greatly heartened the ulema, which anticipated a larger allocation of such lands among their ranks.

Scholars have noted the immediate enforcement of the order in Punjab, and the resumption of *madad-i-maash* grants from the jogis of Jakhbar near Pathankot. In the prevailing atmosphere, the Hindu alarm could not be mitigated by instances of royal endowments to Brahmins and temples, notably the land grants to Siva temples in Allahabad, Banaras and Gauhati.

Aurangzeb's commitment was to conservative Sunni Islam. He forbade Muharram processions in which Shi'is participated in large numbers. He also prohibited the pilgrimage of women to the tombs of saints, and the roofing of mausoleums, as this violated the

Sharia injunction that they be open to the sky.

Aurangzeb's religious interventions provoked widespread revolts in the empire.

### **The Revolts of the Jats, Satnamis, Sikhs and Rajputs**

Aurangzeb's reign is known for the recurrent revolts of significant sections of the population. Jats, Satnamis, Marathas, Sikhs and Rajputs, all challenged Mughal hegemony and gravely damaged its prestige.

Some modern scholars have suggested that economic considerations played a motivating role in these revolts. They claim that the so-called Hindu resistance movements actually represented the coming together of peasants and zamindars on purely economic considerations. It is worth noting, however, that many of these communities had a long history of resistance to Mughal rule and that their disenchantment did not begin with Aurangzeb.

### **The Jats**

It has been pointed out that the area on both sides of the Yamuna had been in ferment much before Aurangzeb's time and imperial troops had to be repeatedly directed against it. Under Aurangzeb, the region became the centre of the Jat revolt.

In 1669, the Jats of Mathura revolted under Gokula, the zamindar of Tilpat. The rebellion rapidly spread among the peasants of the area, forcing Aurangzeb to march in person to



suppress it. After an intense battle, Gokula was captured and executed.

The leadership of the movement then passed to Rajaram, a Jat zamindar of Sinsini, near Agra. Under him, the Jats virtually blockaded the overland route to the Deccan. They also occupied Sikandra, where according to Niccolao Manucci, in "the greatest affront possible to the imperial house," they violated the tomb of Akbar. Though Rajaram was subsequently killed by the Mughal army, the Jat resistance did not falter.

Aurangzeb sent a Mughal contingent against the Jat stronghold of Sinsini. Fifteen hundred Jats and over a thousand imperial troops died in the four-month siege. By 1691, the Jat insurrection had been contained, but not fully suppressed. Rajaram's nephew, Churaman Jat, emerged as a power to reckon with, after Aurangzeb's death. Ultimately, an independent Jat kingdom emerged with its capital at Bharatpur, which reached its zenith under the famous Surajmal. Though the leadership of the movement was in the hands of Jat zamindars, the Jat peasantry displayed great solidarity with them and actively fought alongside.

#### The Satnamis

The Satnami sect was founded in 1657 in Narnaul (Mahendragarh district, Haryana) and, according to a contemporary historian, comprised four to five thousand householders. The Satnamis dressed like mendicants and usually earned their living through agriculture and small trade.

The Satnami revolt began in 1672 when a Mughal soldier killed a Satnami. The contemporary chronicler, Saqi Mustaid Khan, expressed amazement as to what came over this "destitute gang of goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers and tanners and other... artisan castes that their conceited brains became so overclouded? Rebellious pride having found a place in their brains, their heads became too heavy for their shoulders."

Though totally lacking in weaponry, the Satnamis inflicted several defeats on the Mughal forces before they fell, re-enacting, in Saqi Mustaid Khan words, scenes of the great Mahabharata war.

#### The Sikhs

The Sikhs were another group, which crossed swords with Aurangzeb. As narrated earlier, the Sikh Panth founded by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century, had continued as a peaceful spiritual movement till the martyrdom of Guru Arjun by Emperor Jahangir pushed it on the path of resistance under Guru Hargobind.

Angered by rumours of Guru Har Rai's support to Dara during the latter's journeys in Punjab, Aurangzeb called him to court. The Guru sent his elder son, Ram Rai, whom he subsequently bypassed for succession, instead nominating his younger son, Har Krishan, then just a young child. He too, was summoned to Delhi by the Emperor, where he resided in the village of Raisina at the house of Raja Jai Singh, the site of the present Gurudwara Bangla Sahib.

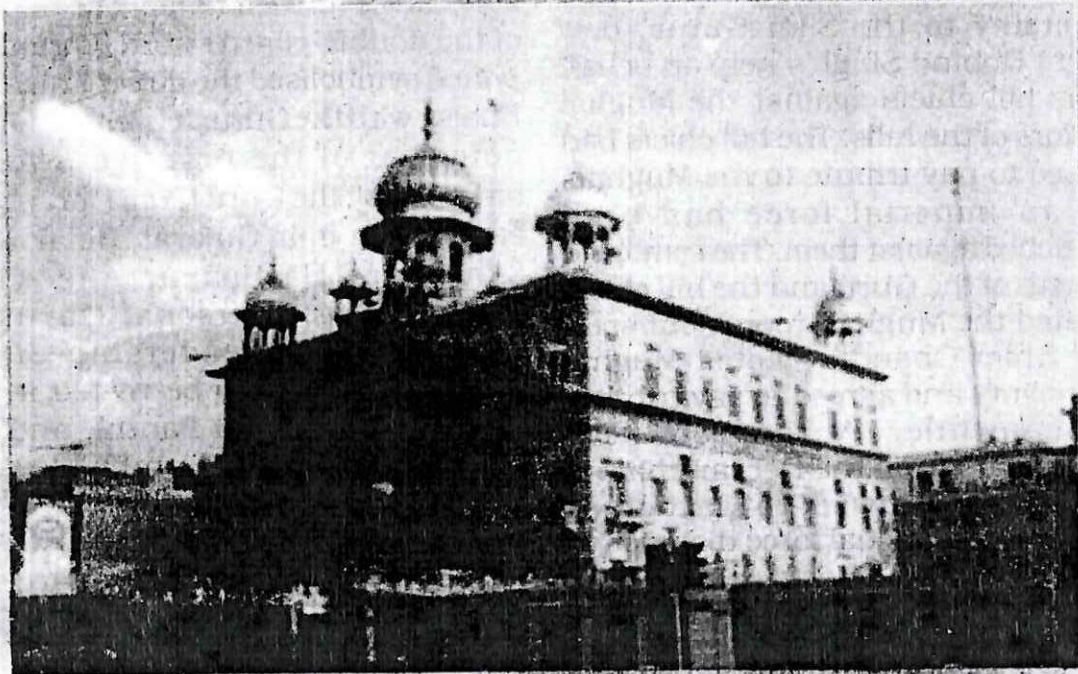


Guru Har Krishan died of smallpox in 1664 after naming Teg Bahadur as the next Guru of the Sikhs.

The new Guru established his base at Makhowal, in the territory of the chief of Bilaspur. In 1665, however, he left Makhowal to establish contact with the Sikh *sangats* (centres) in the Gangetic plain. On imperial orders he was detained, but subsequently released on the intervention of Ram Singh, son of Raja Jai Singh. From Delhi the Guru visited Agra, Prayag, Banaras, Sasaram, Patna and Monghir. From Monghir, he went to Dacca, where he was joined by Ram Singh in 1668. He accompanied the latter on the Assam expedition and went back to Makhowal in 1671. His son Gobind Rai (the future

Guru Gobind Singh), who was to be the last Guru, was born in Patna in 1666.

In 1675, a delegation of Kashmiri Brahmins met the Guru and apprised him of their persecution in the Kashmir valley. After deep reflection, the Guru decided to court martyrdom to uphold their beliefs. He was arrested and brought to Delhi where he was asked to perform a miracle, which the Guru declined. He was then asked to convert to Islam. Upon his refusal, he was beheaded in Chandni Chowk on 11 November 1675. The Sis Ganj Gurudwara marks the site of his martyrdom. As a symbolic gesture of the *sangat's* anger, a Sikh in Agra threw two bricks at the Mughal Emperor when he was returning from the Jama Masjid.



Sis Ganj Gurudwara



Guru Teg Bahadur was succeeded by his young son, Guru Gobind Singh. A dynamic personality, the Guru was well versed in Sanskrit and Persian, and was skilled in both poetry and warfare. The *Dasam Granth*, or the Book of the Tenth Master, contains many of his writings. He is also remembered for creating the institution of *nirmalas*, a title bestowed upon Sikh teachers revered for their learning and piety. The Guru had dispatched five Sikhs to Banaras, where they stayed for seven years and returned as adepts in classical Indian philosophy. After the evacuation of Anandpur, the *nirmalas* went to Hardwar, Allahabad and Banaras and established centres of learning that exist to this day.

The ruler of Bilaspur, Bhim Chand, who had previously provided hospitality to the Sikh Gurus, now sought Gobind Singh's help on behalf of the hill chiefs against the Mughal *faujdar*s of the hills. The hill chiefs had refused to pay tribute to the Mughals and an imperial force had been dispatched against them. The combined strength of the Guru and the hill chiefs defeated the Mughal troops, but soon after Bhim Chand accepted Mughal sovereignty and agreed to pay tribute.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb sent instructions from the Deccan that no crowds be allowed to gather at Anandpur. A Mughal force dispatched to attack Anandpur was compelled to withdraw; a second force was defeated by the combined forces of the Guru and the hill chiefs; and a third also met with failure. Throughout this turbulent period, Guru Gobind Singh maintained

contact with the Sikh *sangats* spread all over the country.

The Guru composed the *Chandi di Var* in 1684 depicting the legendary clash between gods and demons as portrayed in the *Markandeya Purana*. His composition also shows that he was influenced by the lore of Rama and Krishna, particularly their recourse to battle to ensure the triumph of good over evil.

On Baisakhi day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh constituted a new order of Sikhs called the *Khalsa*, and introduced a new baptism ceremony. Sikhs who took the pledge of *Khalsa* were required to observe the five K's. These were: *kesh* (hair), *kirpan* (sword), *kachha* (underwear), *kanghi* (comb) and *kara* (iron bangle). In addition, they were to add "Singh" to their name. The baptism of the double-edged sword (*khanda da pahu*) symbolised the direct link of the *Khalsa* with the Guru. It is interesting to note that of the first five *Khalsas* ordained by the Guru (*Panj Piarey*), one each hailed from Gujarat, Bidar, Puri, Lahore and Hastinapur. After Guru Gobind Singh, personal Guruship ended and the leadership of the community came to be vested in the *Khalsa Panth* (Guru Panth), and the *Granth Sahib* (Guru Granth).

Meanwhile, the growing number of armed Sikhs in Anandpur worried the hill chiefs who now allied with the Mughal *faujdar*s. The increased Sikh population in Anandpur raised problems of supplies, which aggravated relations with the hill chiefs. Together with the Mughal forces, the hill chiefs



laid siege on Anandpur. After a long blockade, the Sikhs agreed to evacuate on promise of safe conduct, but the Mughal troops violated the pact and attacked the retreating Sikhs. The elder two sons of the Guru died fighting at Chamkor, while the younger two were captured and killed by the Mughal *faujdar* of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, by being bricked up alive.

Informed of these developments while cornered in the Deccan, Aurangzeb thought it prudent to conciliate the Guru and invited him to the south. The Guru accused the Emperor of perfidy, but agreed to a meeting. He was on his way to south when he learnt of the Emperor's death.

In the battle of succession that followed, the Guru supported Bahadur Shah in the hope of getting justice against Wazir Khan. Finding Bahadur Shah reluctant to punish the Mughal Fauzdar of Sirhind he instructed his disciple, Banda Singh Bahadur, to lead a revolt against the Mughals. Soon after, an Afghan, linked either with Wazir Khan or with an imperial officer, mortally wounded Guru Gobind Singh. Banda swiftly gathered a large army and, though lacking in firearms and horses, stormed Mughal strongholds in Punjab.

Banda occupied large parts of Mughal territory and appointed his own men as *faujders*, *diwans* and *kardars* in the region between the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Proclaiming himself a sovereign, he struck coins in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and issued orders (*hukmnamas*)

on his own seal. Towards the end of 1715, however, Banda along with seven hundred of his followers, was taken from the fort of Gurdas Nangal, near Gurdaspur, and paraded on the streets of Delhi before being executed in 1716.

### Other Uprisings

Many other mutinies convulsed northern India at this time. Notable among them are the revolts of the Mangcha tribe as well as those of the Meos; the Wattu, Dogar and Gujars of Lakhi jungle; the Chunwal Kols of Gujarat; and the Bundelas of Orchha under the spirited Chhatrasal, who even travelled to the Deccan to meet Shivaji.

Chhatrasal attacked imperial troops in Dhamoni and Sironj, and began collecting *chauth* from the neighbouring tracts of the Mughal empire. He soon captured Kalinjar and Dhamoni, and ravaged large parts of Malwa. So great was his success that in 1705 Aurangzeb was forced to make peace with him and appoint him mansabdar. However, after the Emperor's death, he established himself as an independent ruler.

### The Rajput Rebellion

The Rajput rebellion of 1679-80 illustrates the Emperor's hardened attitude towards his non-Muslim subjects. Some scholars concede that Aurangzeb had begun restricting the promotion of Rajputs within the ruling class by 1666 itself.

In December 1678, Jaswant Singh Rathor, the Raja of Marwar, who had fought against Aurangzeb in the war of



succession, died in Afghanistan. He had no male heir, but was survived by two pregnant wives. The Emperor immediately ordered that the whole of Marwar be resumed as crown land (*khalisa*) and dispatched imperial troops to takeover the kingdom. Mughal troops indulged in temple and idol-smashing while occupying the city, despite strong protests from the Rathors.

Meanwhile, the two queens gave birth to two sons. The elder was Ajit Singh, and the Rathors wanted him recognised as Raja. The Emperor offered to confer the title of raja on him when he attained adulthood, on the condition that he be raised as a Muslim in the imperial household. On being rebuffed, Aurangzeb sent his troops to arrest the Ranis and Ajit Singh. Assisted by Durga Das Rathor, they fled in disguise and reached Jodhpur with the imperial army in hot pursuit. Aurangzeb now declared Inder Singh as the Raja of Jodhpur.

The Emperor also sent a Mughal force under his son, Prince Akbar, to occupy Marwar. The Rathors put up a stiff resistance and received help from Raj Singh, the Rana of Mewar. But the Rajputs eventually lost to the imperial forces, which then destroyed a number of temples in the area. The Rajputs retreated to the hills and continued guerilla attacks against the Mughals.

The cornered Rajputs urged Prince Akbar to revolt against his father, whose anti-Rajput and anti-Hindu policies, they claimed, were ruining the empire. The Prince agreed with their

assessment, but the Emperor's trickery foiled their joint attack on the Mughal forces. The Rajputs sheltered Akbar for several months and finally transported him to the court of the Maratha ruler, Shambhaji.

Meanwhile, Raja Raj Singh of Mewar died in 1680. Aurangzeb decided to make peace with his son, Jai Singh, so that he could be free to go to the Deccan. It was another twenty years before the Mughals could come to an understanding with the Marwar ruler. Most of the Rathor Rajputs did not join imperial service during this period.

In his panoramic *'The Discovery of India,'* Jawaharlal Nehru, presented a graphic portrayal of Aurangzeb and the damage his policies inflicted on the empire. He wrote that "Aurangzeb far from understanding the present, failed even to appreciate the immediate past; he was a throw-back and, for all his ability and earnestness, he tried to undo what his predecessors had done. A bigot and an austere puritan, he was no lover of art or literature. He infuriated the great majority of his subjects by imposing the old hated *jeziya* poll-tax on the Hindus and destroying many of their temples. He offended the proud Rajputs who had been the props and pillars of the Mughal Empire. In the north he roused the Sikhs, who, from being a peaceful sect... were converted by repression and persecution into a military brotherhood. Near the west coast of India, he angered the warlike Marathas, descendants of the ancient Rashtrakutas, just when a brilliant captain had risen amongst them."



### Nobility under Aurangzeb

A modern study of the mansabdars under Aurangzeb shows how narrowly based the Mughal ruling elite continued to be. Heredity was accorded the highest priority, and *Khanazadas* or sons and descendents of mansabdars, constituted a little less than half the nobility.

A notable feature was the decline in the number of foreigners in comparison to previous regimes. From seventy per cent under Akbar, their number had come down to roughly forty per cent under Aurangzeb. This was primarily due to a decline in the number of persons coming to India from the Uzbek and Safavid kingdoms. Another reason was Aurangzeb's extended involvement in the Deccan, which forced him to recruit large numbers of mansabdars from that region.

The Hindu component of the Mughal nobility consisted overwhelmingly of Rajputs and Marathas. Their strength was 21.6 per cent of the total in the first half of Aurangzeb's rule, and an all-time high of 31.6 per cent in the second. This escalation was due to the influx of Marathas who began to outnumber Rajputs in the mansabdari system.

Aurangzeb's relationship with the Rajputs is highly contentious, but there is broad agreement that his attitude towards them was not the same as that of Akbar. It has been suggested that rather than deliberately reduce Rajput representation in the Mughal nobility, Aurangzeb clamped down on their promotions.

The Deccanis, another constituent of the Mughal ruling class, were former nobles of Bijapur and Golconda. This group did not include the Marathas in the imperial records. The Deccanis were a small presence in the Mughal nobility in the first half of Aurangzeb's rule, but there was an upsurge in their fortunes in the second phase when the Emperor embarked on an aggressive policy in the Deccan. The large-scale entry of Deccanis drastically altered the character of the nobility and contributed to the decline of the empire.

The Mughal inability to score a decisive victory over the Marathas compelled the Emperor to devise new strategies to deal with them. While continuing to fight them, Aurangzeb included Maratha chiefs willing to cross over into the mansabdari system. But this was not a successful strategy as other Maratha chiefs took their place and continued the struggle. Still, Marathas constituted nearly seventeen per cent of the mansabdars in the second phase of Aurangzeb's rule (1679-1707), as opposed to less than six per cent in the first (1658-78).

Indian Muslims, called *Shaikhzadas*, comprised between twelve to thirteen per cent of the nobility under Aurangzeb. Scribal communities like the *Khatris* and *Kayasthas* were also represented in the administrative system.

### The Rise of European Political Power

The political troubles of the Emperor emboldened European trading companies to challenge Mughal



authority and negotiate with it on terms of equality. The Europeans established a number of fortified settlements on the Indian coasts, from where they harassed native shipping and even threatened the naval blockade of Mughal ports.

In 1689-90, for instance, the British Governor of Bombay ordered the seizure of eighty Indian vessels in a bid to pressurise the Mughal emperor to stop unauthorised private English traders from operating in India, as this was deleterious to the Company's economic interests. Infuriated at this audacious behaviour, Aurangzeb ordered the stoppage of all British trade and the capture of their trading missions. The English factors in Bengal fled down the Hughli to a site subsequently known as Calcutta. The Emperor also ordered the Sidi, an ally, to attack English positions in Bombay. These retaliatory measures forced the British to backtrack and offer reparations.

Over the next few decades, Bombay, under British control, grew in commercial stature till it eclipsed Surat as the pre-eminent port of western India. Enclaves of European trading companies also came up on the south-

east coast. The Dutch established control of the port of Pulicat, which they defended with the Fort Geldria, while the British stationed themselves at Madras, fortified by Fort St. George. The French occupied the trading centre of Pondicherry, which too, was defended by a military garrison.

In the closing years of the seventeenth century, tensions between the Mughals and the English East India Company rose to an all-time high over the Ganj-i-Sawai incident. The Ganj-i-Sawai was the largest vessel in the Surat mercantile fleet and every year carried a number of influential pilgrims to Mecca, along with Indian goods for trade in the region. In 1695, however, pirates boarded the ship and committed grave atrocities on the passengers and looted all valuables. The Mughals held the English company responsible for this and other instances of naval piracy in the Indian Ocean. The British and Dutch companies promised to end the menace, but did nothing to improve the situation.

Aurangzeb's successors could also not tame the trading companies, which continued to grow in importance till one of them emerged as the leading power of the sub-continent.



**Exercises**

1. What were the measures taken by Aurangzeb to cast his regime in a strictly Islamic mould?
2. Were the revolts of the Jats and Satnamis against the Mughal Empire prompted by purely economic considerations?
3. Discuss the nature of the Sikh movement in the time of Aurangzeb.
4. What were the causes of the Rajput rebellion in Aurangzeb's reign?
5. In what ways was the Rajput representation in the nobility altered under Aurangzeb?
6. Match the following:

|                              |                                        |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <i>a) Fatawa-i-Alamgiri</i>  | was a history of Aurangzeb's reign.    |
| <i>b) Muntakhab-ul-Lubab</i> | led a revolt of the Bundelas.          |
| <i>c) Chhatra Sal</i>        | was a digest of Islamic jurisprudence. |



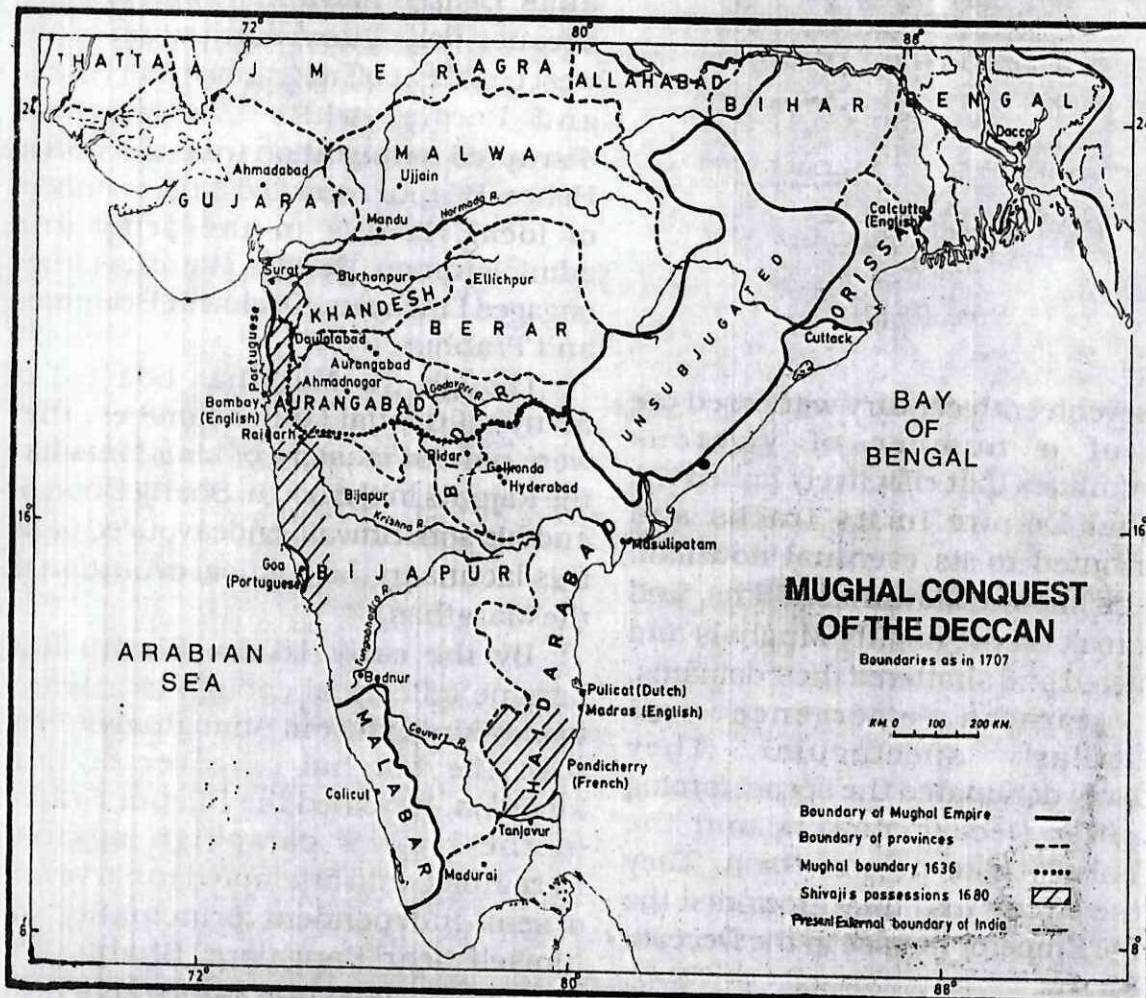
# 17 CHAPTER

## THE DECCAN IMBROGLIO



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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.





**THE** seventeenth century witnessed the rise of a number of vigorous communities that effectively halted the Mughal Empire in its tracks and contributed to its eventual downfall. Groups like the Marathas, Sikhs, and Jats, took on the mighty Mughals and splintered and shattered their domains. The Maratha emergence was particularly spectacular. They suddenly dominated the scene, forcing the other Deccan powers and the Mughals to take note of them. They grew so strong that they grounded the Mughal Emperor himself in the Deccan.

### **Rise of the Marathas**

The Marathas were an amalgam of several agricultural and allied castes. They differed from other peasant communities in the area on account of their tradition of military service, in return for which they received grants of land. Many Marathas had served in the armies of the Bahamani kingdom and its successor states.

Bijapur rulers like Ibrahim Adil Shah preferred the Marathas as a

counter-balance to their Deccani (Indian Muslim) and Afaqi (recent migrants from Arabia and Central Asia) units. Bijapur had a small Muslim elite because Portuguese occupation of the west coast cut off migration from Arabia and Persia, while the Mughals disrupted immigration from the north. Hence, Bijapur recruited large numbers of local Hindus in the army and administration. Besides Marathas, they engaged Lingayats, Deshastha Brahmins and Prabhus.

Though the Marathas boasted of many influential landed families, they were not the masters of kingdoms like the Rajputs in the north. Shahji Bhonsle and his son, Shivaji, endeavoured to fill this lacuna in the political evolution of the Marathas.

By the early 1630s, Shahji had become influential enough to attempt to play kingmaker in Ahmadnagar. But with the Mughal takeover of that kingdom, he joined the Bijapur Sultan in the latter's campaign against Karnataka, and attempted to carve out a semi-independent principality for himself near Bangalore. Shahji also retained his hold over his estates near Poona. In a tacit arrangement, the Sultan left much of the Western Ghats in the control of Maratha chieftains who were entrenched there.

### **Shivaji**

Shivaji was brought up by Shahji's elder wife, Jija Bai, and his tutor-guardian, Dadaji Kond-deva, at Poona, away from the Persian cultural influences of the Bijapur court. At



eighteen, he took charge of his father's estate and in defiance of the father and Bijapur, captured a number of adjoining forts. Principal among them were Torna, Chakan and Purandar. In 1656, Shivaji scored a notable success in his bid to become the pre-eminent Maratha leader when he wrested Javali from its Maratha chief. The acquisition gave him control of the highlands (Maval region) and paved the way for further expansion.

Aurangzeb's withdrawal from the Deccan to join the war of succession for the Mughal throne and the accession of Ali Adil Shah II as Sultan of Bijapur, opened a new chapter in the history of the south. Shivaji's continuous attacks on Bijapur lands, particularly his occupation of northern Konkan, goaded Ali Adil Shah II to send general Afzal Khan against the Maratha in 1659. While marching against Shivaji, the Bijapur troops detoured to desecrate Hindu sacred places, especially Pandharpur, the most important pilgrimage centre in Maharashtra. According to scholars, this behaviour was uncharacteristic of a Bijapuri force and reflected the growing orthodoxy in the kingdom.

Though distrustful of each other, the two sides decided to meet to try to reach an agreement. However, according to Maratha sources, while embracing Shivaji, the Bijapur commander tried to strangle him to death. Shivaji retaliated by killing Afzal Khan instead, and his troops routed the Bijapur army. This bold action made Shivaji a hero throughout Maratha territory.

Shivaji followed this success by capturing the fort of Panhala and large parts of southern Konkan and Kolhapur districts. These developments forced the Sultan of Bijapur to march in person and recover part of his lost territory, before other events compelled him to retreat.

Aware of the importance of naval power, Shivaji built a fleet of small ships, mainly to challenge and contain the Sidis of Janjira, an Abyssinian Muslim family that controlled some seaports and maintained a large navy. But Shivaji was unable to defeat the latter due to ineffective artillery. He also had to maintain contacts with the Portuguese since he was at war with both Bijapur and the Mughals.

### **Shaista Khan**

The growing clout of the Marathas disturbed Aurangzeb and he directed the Mughal governor of the Deccan, Shaista Khan, to attack Shivaji's territories. In 1660 Shaista Khan occupied Poona and four months later Chakan, despite valiant resistance by the Marathas. Instead of pressing the attack, Shaista Khan, perhaps discouraged by the enormity of the task, used his cavalry to ravage the countryside.

In April 1663, Shivaji displayed one of those acts of courage that made him a legend among the Marathas. With a force of barely four hundred men, he carried out a daring raid on the Mughal governor's camp. Shaista Khan was wounded but not killed, though his son, several members of his family, and



followers, lost their lives. This severe humiliation of the Mughal forces compelled Aurangzeb to recall his governor and appoint his son, Prince Muazzam, in his stead.

#### Sack of Surat

Emboldened, Shivaji followed this in 1664 with an attack on the Mughal port-town of Surat. This was a big blow to Mughal prestige and a challenge it could not overlook. Surat was the main port of the Mughal Empire. Mughal emperors and their nobles routinely invested in cargo ships that sailed from here. A large number of pilgrims also used to set sail from Surat for Mecca. Goods and valuables estimated at more than ten million rupees accrued to the Marathas from this expedition. They even attacked the outskirts of Aurangabad, the Mughal capital in the Deccan. The Bijapur forces were also unable to contain them and suffered repeated strikes.

Aurangzeb now felt that the situation called for firm action. Raja Jai Singh, one of the empire's most seasoned generals, was conferred full military authority to deal with Shivaji and also effect the annexation of Bijapur. Jai Singh first tried to isolate Shivaji by offering inducements to his leading commanders. He also devastated the countryside around Shivaji's *jagir* in Poona in a bid to cripple him. European trading companies were directed to prevent any action by the Maratha fleet. Finally, Jai Singh laid siege to the great fort of Purandar in 1665, forcing the Marathas to capitulate.

#### Treaty of Purandar

According to the treaty of Purandar, Shivaji was to surrender twenty-three of the thirty-five forts held by him, along with the surrounding territory, which yielded an annual revenue of four lakh *huns*. He could keep the remaining twelve forts, including his capital Raigad, with a combined yearly income of one lakh *huns*. He could also retain the territory he possessed in Bijapur Konkan, which generated an income of four lakh *huns* per annum. Besides, Shivaji was to join the Mughal army against Bijapur, in lieu of which he was given permission to conquer Bijapur territory worth five lakh *huns* a year in the Balaghat region. In return, Shivaji was to pay the Mughal Emperor forty lakh *huns* in installments. Shivaji was exempted from personal service, but his minor son, Shambhaji, was granted a mansab of 5000 *zat*.

The terms *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* surfaced in the course of Shivaji's negotiations with Jai Singh. *Chauth* has been described as a form of protection money to be paid in return for not devastating an area. Shivaji collected this tax yearly from Bijapur and Mughal territory. By claiming *sardeshmukhi* rights, Shivaji was presenting himself as the pre-eminent *deshmukh*.

#### Visit to the Mughal Court

Meanwhile, the Mughal-Maratha expedition against Bijapur failed to register any gains, for reasons not quite clear. Jai Singh now persuaded Shivaji to visit the imperial court. Accordingly,



Shivaji, his son Shambhaji, and a small group of followers set forth for Agra. Jai Singh and his son, Ram Singh, who represented him at the imperial court, personally guaranteed Shivaji's safety.

Shivaji made his appearance at the Mughal court on the Emperor's birthday in May 1666, but felt insulted by Aurangzeb's behaviour towards him and stormed out of the audience hall. Orders to kill Shivaji were cancelled only on the intervention of Jai Singh. Shivaji, however, was placed under virtual house arrest, with imperial guards being posted outside Ram Singh's residence.

Within weeks, Shivaji managed to escape, eluding capture by travelling through the tribal area east of Malwa. Stunned by his inexplicable departure, the imperial guards informed the Emperor that Shivaji had vanished all of a sudden, and had either flown into the sky or disappeared into the earth by magic. Suspecting the connivance of Ram Singh, the enraged Emperor removed his father, Jai Singh, from the Deccan and appointed Prince Muazzam in his place. According to Manucci, Aurangzeb despatched Ram Singh on a punishment posting to Assam, a marshy land notorious for its bad climate.

Back in the Deccan, Shivaji avoided attacking the Mughals for the next three years, directing his energies towards the consolidation of the Konkan. The peace with the Mughals collapsed in 1669. Shivaji chafed at the treaty of Purandar by which he had lost twenty-three forts to the Mughals, while gaining

no additional land or income from the joint expedition against Bijapur. In quick succession, he recaptured the forts of Sinhagad, Purandar, Rohida, Lohgad and Mahuli.

### Coronation and Contribution

In 1674, Shivaji had himself crowned an independent Hindu king by Gagabhata, a highly respected Brahmin originally from Maharashtra, but since long resident in Varanasi. Shivaji's coronation has been described as one of the most momentous political acts of the seventeenth century. Quite apart from the fact that it established his primacy over other Maratha leaders and raised him to the status of a ruler, it openly proclaimed the establishment of a Hindu monarchy in defiance of the Mughals. Before the ceremony, Shivaji spent several months in prayer and worship at temples, including the Parasram temple at Chiplun and the Bhavani temple at Pratapgarh, among others.

Shivaji followed his coronation with another bold initiative. In 1677, he forged an anti-Mughal anti-Bijapur alliance with Golconda, the richest of the Deccani states. Golconda was ruled by Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, whose reign marked a major turning point in the kingdom's history. Abul Hasan had appointed two Telugu Brahmin brothers, Madanna Pandit and Akkana, as Chief Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the army respectively, thus heralding a perceptible shift in state policy.



Golconda agreed to partly finance Shivaji's expeditions against the Mughals, and also fight alongside in Bijapur Karnataka, then under tributaries of the Bijapur Sultan, including Shivaji's half brother. On the way to Karnataka, Shivaji spent ten days in prayer at the Siva temple of Shri Shaila. Within a year, Shivaji had conquered Jinji and Vellore, the two important strongholds in Bijapur Karnataka. However, he refused to share his acquisitions with Golconda. Jinji was later to provide shelter to Rajaram and it took the Mughals almost nine years to take it.

In 1679, Shivaji attacked Mughal Surat for the second time, this time netting goods worth over six and a half million rupees. He also ravaged Mughal territories in Berar, Khandesh and Baglan. Shivaji then invaded Bijapur territory in Kanara, and secured the Panhala fort, one of the strongest in the Bijapur area, and Satara.

Shivaji died in 1680 at the age of 53. According to scholars, his greatest accomplishment was to carve out a kingdom and hold it against the vastly superior forces of Bijapur and the Mughals. As a master tactician, Shivaji understood the importance of forts and used them to good effect in his fight with the Mughals. Aware that he could not match his opponents in open battles, he avoided such encounters and resorted to guerilla warfare instead. He disrupted the supply lines of enemy armies and devastated the countryside around their camps, depriving them of food and other essential items.

Shivaji strove consciously to revive ancient forms and patterns of governance in his kingdom. He described himself in his letters as "the protector of cows and brahmins" (*gobrahmance pratipalak*) and "the upholder of the dharma" (*dharma parayena*), epithets of antiquity. At the time of his coronation, he devised a royal insignia and assumed titles, such as Chhatrapati, as a mark of his distinctive status. The day of his consecration marked the commencement of a new era, the *rajyabhisheka saka*.

Several administrative denominations were taken from the ancient past and Sanskrit technical terms coined for official purposes. The council of eight members (*asht pradhans*) consisted of the *peshwa* (prime minister), the *amatya* (revenue minister), the *sachiv* (finance minister), the *mantri* (home minister), the *senapati* (commander-in-chief), the *sumant* (foreign affairs minister), the *nyayadhish* (chief judge) and the *panditrao* (minister for religion). Shivaji introduced Marathi in place of Persian as the court language and also ordered the compilation of a Sanskrit dictionary, the *Raj-Vyavahar Kosh*. He was an ardent devotee of the famous Sant Ramdas.

Available records reveal that Shivaji divided his kingdom into four provinces, which in turn were subdivided into *parganas*. He gave particular attention to his army, which at the time of his death comprised of 45,000 *paga* (state cavalry), 60,000



*silahdar* cavalry, one lakh infantry, besides a sizeable number of horses and elephants.

It has been said that from his early years, Shivaji envisioned the welfare and prosperity of his people. In the relatively peaceful last decade of his reign, he worked to rebuild Maharashtra. He extended developmental loans to agriculturists and tried to repopulate devastated areas. For purposes of tax collection, he ordered measurement of agricultural land, which seems to have been carried out in the Desh region, though not in the Konkan.

Shivaji's relations with the Maratha landed families, the *deshmukhs*, have been the subject of considerable academic debate. Available evidence suggests that they remained a powerful force under Shivaji, though he may have tried to curtail their jurisdiction. To augment his powers over the latter, Shivaji expanded the crown lands and developed the administration, appointing several *deshasta* Brahmins to man his bureaucracy. He also greatly increased his personal army, in comparison to the other *deshmukhs*. His will reveals that he personally owned thirty thousand horses. In addition, he owned guns and controlled important forts in Maharashtra.

### **The Arrival of Prince Akbar**

Shivaji was succeeded by his elder son, Shambhaji. Meanwhile, events in the Deccan took an unexpected turn with the arrival of the rebel Prince Akbar to the Maratha court. Disenchantment

with Aurangzeb's anti-Hindu policies and his unwillingness to compromise in the Deccan increased the appeal of the rebel prince, even within the Mughal camp.

The correlation of forces in the south was also advantageous to Prince Akbar. The two Telugu Brahmin ministers dominated Golconda, while the Marathas forthrightly presented themselves as foes of Aurangzeb. The possibility of an alliance between the disgruntled imperial prince, the Marathas, Golconda, as also the prospect of a link up with the rebellious Rajputs of Marwar and Mewar, alarmed Aurangzeb.

In 1681, Prince Akbar proclaimed himself Emperor while Shambhaji attacked and looted Mughal territory in Khandesh. Faced with this twin challenge, Aurangzeb himself marched south with the entire central army besides the contingents of three royal princes and leading mansabdars.

Over the next four years, Aurangzeb sent repeated expeditions against the Maratha kingdom, each of which ravaged the territory but could not overpower the hill forts. The Mughals also failed to draw Shambhaji to open battle.

### **Bijapur and Golconda**

Unable to secure a decisive victory over the Marathas, Aurangzeb resolved to effect the final annexation of Bijapur and Golconda. In 1685, an eighty thousand strong Mughal army laid siege on Bijapur. After holding out for fifteen months, the Sultan surrendered



and Bijapur became a province of the Mughal Empire. The Sultan was taken into custody, but his leading nobles were absorbed into imperial service.

Golconda was the next to fall. Saqi Mustaid Khan has left a detailed account of Aurangzeb's grievances against the kingdom. He writes: "Abul Hasan...made the... Hindus the managers and administrators of the affairs of his state... No respect was left for Islam and its adherents;... while idol-temples flourished;... in the many kinds of injury that the hellish Sambha (Shambhaji, the Maratha king) had inflicted on worshippers of the True God, Abul Hasan became his helper and ally."

Abul Hasan's sins thus included partiality to Hinduism and Shi'ism at the cost of Sunni Islam, and financing Shambhaji's attacks on Mughal territory. To placate Aurangzeb, a group of Muslim nobles murdered Madanna and Akkana, which was followed by a general massacre of Brahmins and their families in the Hindu quarter of Golconda fort. But this failed to ward off the Mughal attack.

Equipped with nearly fifty thousand infantry, an equally formidable cavalry and over a hundred large artillery pieces, Aurangzeb laid siege to Golconda fort, which lasted for over eight months. Treachery by a single nobleman finally ensured Aurangzeb's victory. Over sixty million rupees of the state treasury, along with enormous quantities of treasure, fell into Mughal hands. According to Khafi Khan, during the siege of Golconda fort, Aurangzeb

ordered that all infidel customs that Abul Hasan had condoned be discarded, temples demolished and replaced by mosques.

Modern historians have highlighted Aurangzeb's unequal treatment of the Deccani political elite. The Muslim nobles of Golconda, they say, were given comparable employment in the Mughal Empire. Bijapuri Muslim nobles were also integrated into the mansabdari system. The Brahmin and Telugu officials of the two states, however, were almost completely discharged from service.

Aurangzeb speedily integrated Golconda and Hyderabad Karnataka into the administrative apparatus of the Mughal Empire. Mughal officers were given charge of key departments and offices to facilitate the transition. *Jaziya* was imposed on the Hindu population and yielded about one million rupees annually. Bijapur, too, was placed under Mughal officers to hasten its assimilation into the empire.

#### **The Marathas Revisited**

After subjugating Bijapur and Golconda, the Emperor briefly tasted victory on the Maratha front as well. Shambhaji's failure to provide assistance to Prince Akbar forced the latter to seek asylum in the Safavid court in Persia. What is more, in 1689, a Mughal contingent captured Shambhaji and his adviser, the controversial brahmin, Kavi Kalash, at Sangameshwar near Ratnagiri. Shambhaji was dressed as a buffoon and presented before the Emperor. The



ulema pronounced the death sentence on him for having killed good Muslims. He was tortured for a fortnight, hacked to death, and his body thrown to dogs.

Aurangzeb now appeared to be master of the Deccan. But the Marathas were made of sterner stuff. They quickly enthroned Shambhaji's younger brother, Rajaram, then about nineteen years of age. When the Mughal army arrived and besieged the capital, Rajaram and a group of followers fled on foot towards Jinji, eight hundred kilometres away. The Mughals captured Shambhaji's wife, nine-year-old son, Shahuji, and other family members. Aurangzeb decided to bring up Shahu in his own household and thereby effect his acculturation into Mughal traditions.

The Mughal-Maratha contest in Jinji continued for nine years. Rajaram received generous support from his cousin, Shahji II, the Raja of Thanjavur, as well as from intrepid Maratha commanders like Dhanaji Jadhav and Santaji Ghorpade, who regularly cut off Mughal supply lines and created crises in the imperial camp. Rajaram left Jinji just before its fall in 1698, though some members of his family were taken into Mughal custody.

The Maratha movement now became more decentralised and consequently more damaging to the Mughals. Individual Maratha commanders like Ram Chandra Bavdekar, Shankarji Malhar, Parashuram Trimbak and Prahlad Niraji, raised their own armies and attacked Mughal forces at will. They

also began collecting *chauth* in Gujarat and the western Deccan. Though not nearly as well equipped as the Mughals, the Maratha armies were high on morale and mobility, and resorted to surprise attacks. They often captured Mughal nobles and took huge ransoms to set them free.

Aurangzeb now declared *jihad* on the Marathas and began attacking the hill fortresses of Maharashtra. When Rajaram died in 1700, his widow, Tara Bai, declared her four-year-old son, Shivaji II, king and herself the regent.

Aurangzeb now began to contemplate using Shambhaji's son, Shahuji, who was still his prisoner. He offered to free the latter if he converted to Islam, but Shahuji refused. Aurangzeb then attempted to effect a solution to the Maratha problem by proposing to release Shahu, but that deal also failed to materialise. Tara Bai kept up the pressure on the Mughal forces and appointed agents to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the region. In 1700, the emboldened Maratha armies crossed the Narmada and attacked Gujarat and Malwa.

Taking advantage of the growing political upheaval, European trading companies in turn began to entrench themselves in places such as Bombay and Madras. Aurangzeb's preoccupation with the Marathas prevented him from adequately dealing with this problem, though on several occasions he directed his officers to take action against the companies. After nearly three decades of campaigning in



the Deccan, Aurangzeb died at Aurangabad in 1707, leaving the Marathas unconquered.

### **Marathas after Aurangzeb**

Shahu's release soon after the death of Aurangzeb triggered off a contest between him and Tara Bai for the leadership of the Marathas. The Mughals, however, could not avail of the opportunity to shore up their position in the Deccan. Meanwhile, Shahu's appointment of the Chitpavan brahmin, Balaji Vishwanath, as Peshwa in 1713 inaugurated a new era in Maratha history. Several new groups of Marathas and brahmins now became politically ascendant and added fresh verve to the Maratha enterprise.

The Marathas loomed large on the Indian scene; the Peshwa even travelled to Delhi to assist the Sayyid brothers in placing a puppet on the imperial throne. He turned triumphant to the Deccan in 1719, having secured Mughal ratification of a treaty extremely favourable to Shahu. By this, the Mughals accepted Maratha claims to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six subahs of the Deccan, as well as *chauth* in Malwa and Gujarat.

Balaji Vishwanath was succeeded as Peshwa by his son, Baji Rao I (1720-1740), then a young man of twenty. He has been described as the most charismatic leader in Maratha history after Shivaji. Convinced that the enfeebled Mughal Empire could not resist a Maratha movement northwards, he spearheaded an ambitious expansionist programme. Maratha

leaders like the Dabhades, Gaikwads, Bandes, Pawars, Shindes, Holkars and Bhonsles, often in conjunction with the Peshwa, and sometimes without, fanned into Gujarat and Malwa, winning impressive victories. Many of these Maratha leaders were teenagers, whose abilities were recognised by Shahu and the Peshwa. During these decades, the Marathas even struck at Delhi (where they briefly held the Emperor captive) and Rajputana. As in the past, the Mughals failed to formulate a strategy to deal with them.

Among the other notable events during Baji Rao's tenure was the treaty of Palkhed (1728) by which the Nizam of Hyderabad was forced to recognise the Maratha claims to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the Deccan and Shahu as the sole Maratha monarch, and the treaty of Warna (1731), which finally settled the claims of Tara Bai by granting her a state at Kolhapur. Also significant was the Maratha attack on the Portuguese, which resulted in the latter's expulsion from the Konkan and their confinement to Goa and Daman. Salsette, Bassein and Chaul, all came into Maratha hands. This left the Marathas and the British in the contest for control over coastal Maharashtra. No less important was the treaty of Bhopal (1739) with the Nizam, by which the whole of Malwa was ceded to the Marathas and their sovereignty recognised in the region between the Narmada and the Chambal rivers.

Baji Rao died at the age of forty and was succeeded as Peshwa by his



nineteen year old son, Balaji Baji Rao (also known as Nana Saheb). Maratha sardars continued to push into Rajasthan, the region around Delhi, and onwards into Punjab. Maratha armies also attacked Bundelkhand, the borders of Uttar Pradesh, Orissa,

Bengal and Bihar. In the south they crossed the Karnataka and by the treaty of Bhalke (1751), won large parts of Khandesh. The Marathas, however, suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761 at Panipat.

### Exercises

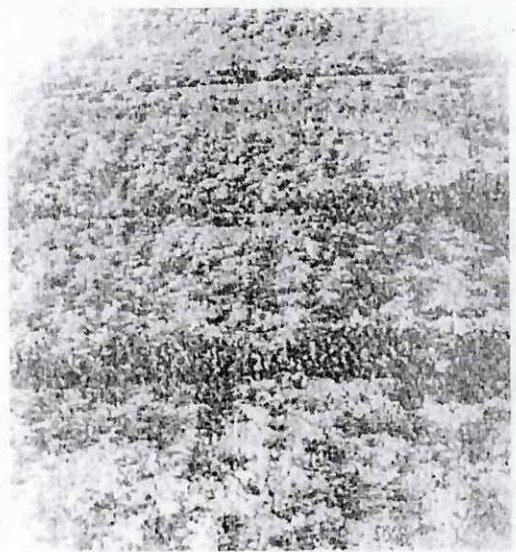
1. Define the term Maratha. How far were the Marathas represented in the administrative systems of the Deccani states?
2. Describe Shivaji's career till the treaty of Purandar.
3. What were the terms and conditions of the treaty of Purandar? Why did it fail?
4. Evaluate the significance of Shivaji's career and his role in the downfall of the Mughal Empire.
5. Describe Aurangzeb's actions in Golconda and his treatment of the Muslim political elite in the state.
6. Briefly illustrate the nature of the Maratha movement after the death of Shivaji.
7. On a map of India, mark the boundary of the Mughal empire in the Deccan in 1707.



# 18 CHAPTER

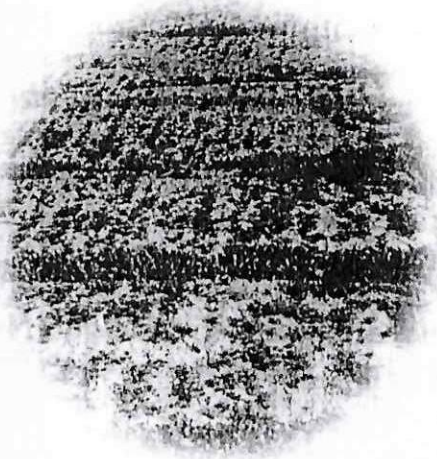
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THE abundance of written records from the sixteenth century onwards have enabled historians to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the state of the economy during the Mughal period. Abul Fazl's meticulously prepared *Ain-i-Akbari* provides a wealth of statistical information which is supplemented by official documents like the *Dastur-ul Amal-i Alamagiri*, the *madad-i maash* and other revenue records, besides countless government *farmans*. An extremely valuable collection of information on Rajasthan is Munhta Nainsi's *Marwar ra Pargana ri Vigat*.

#### The System of Agricultural Production

The peasants tilled the land with the help of wooden ploughs. The ploughshare had only one iron tooth, and sometimes none, as the light soils of India did not require a heavier plough. Indian peasants also used the seed-drill in cultivating certain crops like cotton.

To supplement rain water, the cultivators resorted to artificial irrigation, principally wells and tanks. Water was lifted from wells in various ways – with the wooden scoop (*dhenkli*), the leather bucket, and more rarely, the Persian wheel. In central India, the Deccan and the south, tanks and reservoirs were the major sources of irrigation. In the northern plains, a number of canals were cut from rivers.

Indian peasants grew a wide variety of food and non-food crops. Scholars have calculated that as many as forty-one types of crops were raised in a year in the revenue circle of Agra province. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions seventeen rabi and twenty-six kharif crops cultivated in Delhi suba. The revenue records of a village in eastern Rajasthan for the year 1796 reveal that in the kharif season nine of the thirty-eight cultivators grew more than five crops each. The situation was no less impressive in other regions of the empire.

In the seventeenth century, some exotic crops like tobacco and maize were introduced into India from the New World. Tobacco cultivation began on the western coast in the early seventeenth century, but within fifty years had spread to all parts of the Mughal Empire. Sericulture in Bengal experienced a similar growth pattern. Unknown before the fifteenth century, it expanded so considerably by the seventeenth century as to make Bengal a major silk-producing region.

There were also noteworthy developments in horticulture. The



technique of grafting was used to improve the quality of fruits. The famous Alphonso mangoes were produced by this method. Among the new fruits cultivated were pineapples, papayas and cashew nuts, all of which came from the New World.

According to scholars, agricultural production in Mughal India suffered repeated setbacks owing to recurring famines and the exploitation of the peasantry by the *jagirdars*. As a consequence, they aver, there was no significant increase in the extent of cultivation. Though vast stretches of waste and forest lands were brought under the plough in eastern Bengal and the Terai region, simultaneously other areas were depopulated due to state excesses. Population, too, scholars say, grew at a low average annual rate of 0.14 per cent during the years 1600-1800.

#### South India

Cultivation in the Deccan was labour-intensive. The virgin black soil of the region had to be ploughed several times before it could be readied for sowing. The virgin red soils demanded equally rigorous efforts.

The main crop of the wetlands was paddy and there were two seasons of rice cultivation. Dry cultivation was widely prevalent in the south. Among the implements used were various kinds of ploughs made of wood, with the ploughshare of iron, and varieties of harrows with wooden and iron teeth, and seed drills, hoes and sickles.

#### The Nature of Land Rights

The peasants (*raiya*) were of three types, the *khudkashta*, the *pahikashta*, and the *muqarari raiya*. The *khudkashta* was a peasant proprietor whose land holding and residential house were situated in the same village. He cultivated his own land with the help of his family members and did not sublet it. His land was hereditary and he had the right to transfer, mortgage or even sell it. He could not be ousted from his holding as long as he paid the state share of the revenue.

The *pahikashta* also owned the land he cultivated, but it was located in a different village from his residence. He had the same rights in land as the *khudkashta*. The *muqarari raiya* too enjoyed hereditary ownership of land and could sell, transfer or mortgage it. He differed from the other *raiya* in that he leased his spare land to tenants, known as *muzarian*. These tenants also had hereditary rights to the land on condition of paying rent to the *muqarari raiya*.

Though the peasants' right to land was recognised, they could not abandon the land or refuse to cultivate it. This was because land revenue constituted the principal source of governmental income and the state was not prepared to tolerate any reduction in its resources.

All cultivable land in the empire was divided into two categories, the *khalisa* and the *jagir*. *Khalisa* lands were those whose land revenue went directly to the central treasury, while the *jagir* lands were those assigned to mansabdars in



lieu of cash salaries. The mansabdars were entitled only to collect the state share of revenue and were not the owners of the jagirs.

#### Village Community

The village inhabitants consisted of zamindars, moneylenders, grain merchants and rich peasants at one end of the spectrum and ordinary cultivators and the landless at the other. Most of the peasants belonged not only to the same caste but also to the same sub-division of the caste, and had strong *bhaichara* (brotherhood) links.

A notable feature was the prevalence of individual peasant farming. There is no evidence of joint ownership of village land. Each peasant was taxed individually according to the size of his holding and crop. Though the villages received hardly anything from the towns, a substantial part of their produce found its way to the urban market, thus rendering the villages vulnerable to market forces.

The village community, along with village and caste panchayats, remained functioning units throughout this period. The villagers acted as a group on a number of matters of mutual interest. As scholars have pointed out, they were either collectively loyal or disloyal in paying land revenue to the state. They also had a common financial pool from which they shared village expenses. For instance, they together employed the *patwari* (accountant) to maintain village accounts, and undertook joint action to dam water channels, and even provide religious

benefit and entertainment to the villagers.

#### The Position of Zamindars

The word *zamindar*, as used in the Mughal period, included various hereditary groups that assisted the state in the collection of land revenue. In return for their services, they were entitled to various perquisites such as a share in the agricultural produce and tax-free lands.

Zamindars in the Mughal empire have been classified by scholars into three broad categories: (i) the autonomous chieftains, (ii) the intermediary zamindars, and (iii) the primary zamindars. These categories were not exclusive and in fact overlapped. The zamindar class was all-pervasive and there was hardly a region in the empire which did not have some variety of zamindar.

Scholars have estimated that the share of the zamindars was not less than fifteen to twenty per cent of the revenue in northern India and thirty to thirty-five per cent in Gujarat. The zamindars were a well-armed class, ready to resist Mughal authority in their areas. One hundred and forty-four instances of zamindari revolts have been recorded in the reign of Akbar alone. Medieval records abound with references to *zamindaran-i-zor-talab*, that is, zamindars who paid revenue only when it was forcibly demanded.

The *Ain-i Akbari* states that the troops of the zamindars exceeded forty-four lakhs! It gives the break-up of their armed strength as 384,558 cavalry,



4,277,057 infantry, 1,863 elephants, 4,260 guns and 4,500 boats. The majority of the zamindars lived in forts, which were not only a symbol of their status, but also functioned, when the need arose, as centres of resistance.

Further strengthening the position of the zamindars were their strong roots in the land, which had been in the possession of their families for generations. There were also caste bonds between the zamindars of an area, and between the zamindars and the peasants in their jurisdiction. The very fact that the zamindari forces consisted overwhelmingly of infantry, scholars say, was proof of their intention to defend their local turf and their disinclination for long range operations. On an average, zamindars hardly had one horseman for ten foot-soldiers, whereas under Shah Jahan the imperial army comprised of five horsemen for every foot soldier.

#### The Peasant Armed

The peasantry in Mughal times was armed. Manucci has described how the villagers of the Mathura region defended themselves against Mughal revenue agents in Akbar's time. "The women stood behind their husbands with spears and arrows. When the husband had shot off his matchlock, his wife handed him the lance, while she reloaded the matchlock."

Peter Mundy in 1632 saw in the present-day Kanpur district, "labourers with their guns, swords, and bucklers lying by them whilst they ploughed the ground..." It is said of the Bhadauriya

Rajputs in the Agra region around 1650 that "they are a numerous industrious and brave race. Every village has a small fort. They never pay revenue to the *hakim* (*jagirdar*) without a fight. The peasants (*raiya*) who drive the plough keep a musket (*banduq*) slung over the neck, and a powder-pouch at the waist."

Such accounts have led scholars to comment on "the general tradition of rebellion and agrarian resistance" in Mughal India. In some way, they note, the millions of armed men, cultivators and others that the government was supposed to rule over, were its rivals rather than its subjects.

The problem of collecting revenue from the peasants protected by mud forts, jungles, ravines and weapons plagued the Mughals right through their rule. In the face of this perennial threat to their authority, the Mughals adopted a policy of virtually uprooting peasant society. Thousands and thousands of peasants were enslaved and deported, many sold to countries west of India. Before 1400, Multan had served as a major slave market, but subsequently Kabul became the centre of this trade. Many peasants who were not deported were killed straight away.

#### Slave Trade

In 1562, Akbar forbade the then prevalent practice of his troops keeping or selling the wives and children of rebels. However, the prohibition proved impossible to enforce. Akbar's conquests ensured the slave trade a steady supply. A popular saying then



current was, "slaves from India, horses from Parthia." Jahangir had a share in the trade. William Finch, who visited India between 1608 and 1611, says that from November to the end of March, the Emperor hunted around Agra and sent the men captured to Kabul to be bartered for horses.

In the year 1619-20 of Jahangir's reign, Abdullah Khan Firuz Jang, an Uzbek emigrant *amir*, subdued the Chauhans of the Kalpi-Kanauj area. While the principal leaders were beheaded, the peasants' wives and children were deported to Persia on Firuz Jang's orders and sold there.

Peter Mundy, travelling from Agra to Patna in 1632, reported another exploit of the *amir*. During the four days of his passage through this area, he saw two hundred minars or pillars on which about seven thousand heads were fixed with mortar. On his way back, four months later, he reports that sixty minarets had been added, and new ones were still being erected. When asked by a visitor how many infidel heads he had ordered to be cut off, he replied, "there would be two hundred thousand heads so that there might be two rows of minarets of heads from Agra to Patna." Scholars believe that the account, though possibly exaggerated, may contain a grain of truth.

The Mughals also adopted a policy of settling Afghans in areas of insurgence. The Dilzak Afghans, for instance, totally disappeared from their native land as a result of their enrolment in India. Jahangir despatched them all over the country. In Shah Jahan's reign,

nine thousand Afghans were brought to populate the newly-founded city of Shahjahanpur. Similarly, Afridi Afghans were invited by Aurangzeb to settle in Muzaffarnagar and tame the Rajputs in the region.

#### Inland Trade

Despite the basically self-sufficient character of Indian villages, historians have found that goods were exchanged on an impressive scale at every level of the economy. The rural market featured prominently in intra-local trade and a wide variety of foodstuffs was readily available for sale. The intra-local trade of the towns and cities offered a wider range of goods and was necessarily more complex. Inter-local trade was a short distance variant of the inter-regional trade. The urban markets not only met the needs of their customers, but also served as the nodal points from where dealers of other areas secured their supplies.

The most important items of inter-regional trade were foodstuffs and textiles. Waterways were the preferred mode of transport, though trade along land routes was also substantial. Almost every part of India participated in this trade. The vast movement of goods across the country was made possible by a network of wholesalers, merchants, agents (*gumashtas*) and commission agents (*dalals*). The easy transmission of money from one area to another by means of *hundis* also facilitated inland trade. *Hundis* were bills of exchange promising payment at a discount after a period. There were



two types of *hundis*, *Darshni* and *Miti*. *Hundis* became the standard method of payment in large transactions. A class of professionals, *sarrafs* (*shroffs*) specialised in dealing with *hundis*.

The trading community in India was large and varied. Among the principal merchants were Jains and Bohra Muslims in Gujarat; Oswals, Maheshwaris and Aggarwals in Rajasthan; Chettis on the Coromandel Coast, and Muslim merchants in Malabar. The overland trade to Central Asia was mainly controlled by Multanis and Afghans. Banjaras specialised in the transportation of bulk goods.

#### Non-agricultural Production

Cotton textiles, produced in almost all parts of the country for local use as well as export, were the principal non-agricultural manufacture during these times. English factory records list as many as a hundred and fifty varieties of cotton fabrics. Coarse white striped and checked cotton cloth woven in the villages of Gujarat draped huge sections of the population in the Middle East. High quality cotton woven in south India and Bengal enjoyed a monopoly market in the Middle East, South East Asia, Far East, and after the sixteenth century, Europe, making India virtually the clothier to the world.

There were few villages in the Coromandel and Bengal which did not have at least some weaver families. Dacca, the provincial capital of Bengal till the early eighteenth century, produced very fine cotton muslin called *ab-i-rawan* (flowing water). European

factory records of the seventeenth and eighteenth century testify that India and China dominated the international market in silk and cotton.

Besides dress material, cotton textile products included cotton carpets, bedcovers, pillowcases, sailcloth, mattresses, quilts, and tents. Cotton yarn was produced in large quantities in Broach, Balasore and Kasimbazar. Bengal was a major exporter of silk. Gujarat, too, was renowned for its finished silks, especially *patolas*. Other varieties of silk produced in the country included *tussar* and *muga*. Kashmir, then as now, was famous for its shawls.

In addition, several centres emerged, which specialised in the bleaching, dyeing, printing and painting of cloth. The two main dyestuffs produced were chay (red dye) and indigo (grown at Bayana, near Agra), a substantial amount of the latter being exported to Europe. Other textile products like hemp and cordage catered to local shipping needs.

Sugar was produced mainly in Bengal, Agra, Multan and Orissa. The trading companies exported Bengal sugar to Europe and Persia. Other articles of production included oils, tobacco, opium and saffron.

India was self-sufficient in iron, which was mainly produced in Bengal, Allahabad, Agra, Berar, Gujarat and Delhi. The skills of the Indian metalsmiths were renowned in far-flung areas of the world. Indian damascene swords were so prized that there is mention of the Abbasid Caliph, Mutawakkil, paying an astronomical



sum for a weapon, which had reached Basra.

Patna was regarded the best source of saltpeter which was used in the production of gunpowder. Bijapur and Golconda were famous for their diamond mines. Salt was quarried largely from the Punjab hills and the Sambhar lake. Gold and silver were mined in small quantities.

The shipbuilding industry, flourishing even in pre-Mughal times, continued to make progress. A variety of boats was made to facilitate internal transport. Till the early part of the seventeenth century, India also produced all the ships she needed for trade in the Indian Ocean.

#### **The Advent of European Trading Companies**

The arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut in 1498 inaugurated an era of intense commercial activity by European trading companies. The Portuguese, being the first to land, established hegemony over the spice trade. They were also the first to erect a fort on Indian soil, at Cochin in 1503. They followed these early successes by seizing Goa and setting up other fortified settlements and trading stations, as for example, on the Coromandel Coast, and at Hugly and Chittagong in Bengal. Their maritime empire was later called Estado da India.

By the seventeenth century, the Dutch and English trading companies began directing their ships towards the Indonesian archipelago and Spice Islands, and gravely undermined

Portuguese dominance of the black pepper trade. They shipped cotton cloth produced in Gujarat and Coromandel to Indonesia and utilised the profits to defray the cost of spices. It was estimated in 1621 that about 7 million pounds of pepper was imported annually into Europe. Of this, the Portuguese brought in 1.4 million, and the Dutch and the British the remaining 5.6 million. By 1670s, the Dutch and British imports totalled 13.5 million pounds.

Other Indian commodities sold abroad included indigo, which remained a major item of export till the nineteenth century. After 1650, raw silk from Bengal became an important source of supply to the silk-weaving industry of Italy and France. Saltpeter was in demand among European armament industries.

Indian cotton cloth also began to be shipped to Europe. By the 1620s, the English East India Company was exporting a quarter million pieces of Indian cloth to London. More costly cottons, such as calico and chintz, and Indian silk, also began to attract overseas buyers. In 1684, the Company imported 26.9 million square metres of cotton cloth from India. Dutch imports during this period also registered an upward trend. In the early 1680s, they purchased between four and five million yards of calicoes annually.

Since India's import requirements were few, and mainly restricted to certain metals like tin, lead and copper, and horses, the trading companies had to ship in huge quantities of precious



metals from the New World to pay for goods bought here. According to the available data, in the century after 1660, the Dutch and English companies together brought in over 34 tonnes of silver and nearly half a tonne of gold every year to India. The French traveller Bernier, observing this massive influx, wrote, "gold and silver, after circulating over every part of the world, is finally buried in India which is the sink of gold and silver."

#### European Companies and New Trading Centres

In 1606, the Dutch succeeded in obtaining a *farman* from the Sultan of Golconda, permitting them to establish a factory at Masulipatam and granting them a much lower rate of duty. The Masulipatam region was famous for its fine chintz, which was highly prized in South East Asia. In 1610, the Dutch also gained commercial concessions in Pulicat, which remained the main centre of their trade in the Coromandel till 1690.

The English established their factory at Surat in 1612. They sent an embassy headed by Thomas Roe to Jahangir's court. As a consequence, the English company was permitted to set up trading centres at Agra, Burhanpur, Patna and other important cities. Many of the European trading centres developed into virtually autonomous fortified settlements.

The four major coastal zones that produced a large part of the textiles for import were the region around Surat; the land between the Krishna and Godavari in north Coromandel

adjoining Masulipatam; the zone between Pulicat and Madras in the southern Coromandel; and the Ganges delta which served as the hinterland for the port of Hughli in Bengal.

The activities of the trading companies gave a boost to the Indian economy. In Bengal, for instance, by 1707, the Dutch imported treasure worth 3.2 million florins to pay for their purchases, which included saltpeter, opium, raw silk, woven cotton and silk textiles. The English and the Dutch demand for textiles engaged almost ten per cent of the workers in the textile industry of Bengal. A number of peasants in Bengal took to mulberry cultivation to meet the growing demand for silk.

The high visibility of European trading companies did not imply the eclipse of Indian traders, who retained their dominant status in the field.

#### The Growth of Urban Centres

Scholars have categorised urban centres in northern India into four distinct groups. The first were the primarily administrative cities like Agra, Delhi and Lahore. The second group was the predominantly commercial and manufacturing centers like Patna and Ahmedabad. Pilgrimage centres like Banaras and Mathura comprised the third category, while the fourth consisted of centres specialising in some distinct manufacturing technique or local commodity. Bayana, for instance, was renowned for its indigo, while Khairabad and Daryabad in Awadh were famous for their textiles. Factors favouring urbanisation included the



flourishing internal and international trade; and the enormous expansion in the manufacture and marketing of textiles.

According to some scholars, the "partially Islamic character" of the largest and the most prosperous cities like Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Allahabad and Ahmedabad was visible in their physical appearance, layout and distribution of non-residential space.

Among the characteristic features of such cities were strongly defended palace-forts, which doubled as centres of regional administration; and military features like open grounds (*maidans*) for military parades. They also contained religious structures like mosques, tombs and *madarsas*, as well as secular buildings like *bazars* and *sarais* constructed in styles derived from Iran or Turkistan. The cities were protected by massive walls and gateways, in contrast to the older cities of India.

In addition to the large cities were countless small towns (*qasbas*), which served as principal markets for the sale of grain to meet the imperial revenue demand. They catered to a growing gentry comprising agents of *jagirdars*, moneylenders, grain traders, zamindars, junior officials and religious figures, all of whom established their residences there. It has been estimated that there were 3,200 *qasbas* in Akbar's reign.

#### Technological Progress

Several European observers commented upon the high level of manual skills which substituted for

technology and effective implements in India. One factor inhibiting technological innovation was that merchants and nobles were not involved in the production process. Hence, all the risks and investments of mechanisation would have to be borne by the workmen. Moreover, the artisans' meagre income and low standards of consumption kept down costs, further discouraging automation.

Certain industries like the manufacture of cannons and hand-guns were technologically quite advanced. Indian shipwrights also improved the original European models while constructing ships. Water and wind power were not unknown. Water power was ingeniously used for milling rice in the district of Hazara. Upright looms for the manufacture of carpets were introduced in Andhra in the sixteenth century by Persian immigrants. In Bengal, the methods of silk-reeling were refined at the instance of the European trading companies.

#### Population

Modern scholars are divided on the size of the population in Mughal India. Initially the figure of a hundred million was widely accepted. Subsequently, a re-examination of the data led to a considerable upward revision. It is now estimated that the population of the whole of India totalled between 140 to 150 million overall, with between 107 and 115 million in the Mughal territory under Akbar.

In the year 1600, roughly 85 per cent of the total population was rural and the remaining 15 per cent, that is



around 16 to 17 million, urban. According to the author of the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Akbar's empire contained 120 big cities and 3,200 townships (*qasbas*), each incorporating between 100 to 1000 villages.

### Prices

Nine-tenths of the state income in Mughal India derived from land revenue, the remaining one-tenth coming from urban imposts. The state revenue demand more than doubled from the closing years of Akbar's reign to the end of Aurangzeb's rule. Part of this increase has been explained by the addition of new lands to the empire by way of conquest, and the rest by the rising tax demands.

According to scholars, the increase in state revenues has to be assessed in the backdrop of the secular trend in prices in the seventeenth century. One spurt in prices occurred between 1610 and the mid-1630s, when the price level rose by one and a half to two times in comparison to 1595. The increase was particularly marked in the case of agricultural prices in Agra, sugar in Gujarat and indigo in Bayana and Sarkhej, but was less pronounced in the case of gold, copper and sugar.

During this period (1592-1639) there was a three-fold rise in the silver currency in circulation. Prices registered another high in the early 1660s, the upswing being significant in the case of gold and copper and Bayana indigo. Some stability in the price level was thereafter maintained till the early eighteenth century, which was linked to the decline in currency supply.

### Wages

The monthly wages of unskilled labourers are said to have risen by 67 to 100 per cent from 1595 to 1637-38, and those of ordinary labourers by 38 to 53 per cent. Since grain prices increased by more than a hundred per cent during this period, there was a real decline in the earnings of the lowest paid workers.

### Money

The Mughal Empire had a tri-metallic currency with a high level of uniformity and purity. It was one of the finest coined currencies then existent in the world. The credit for attempting to establish a coinage free from any trace of debasement goes to Sher Shah, but it was under Akbar that the currency system fully matured.

The basic coin, the *rupaya* (rupee), under Akbar weighed 178 grains troy, in which the alloy was restricted to about four per cent. This became the main coinage for commercial transactions; copper coins being used for small dealings. Gold coins seem to have been used chiefly for hoarding purposes.

Mughal coins were issued from a number of royal mints dispersed throughout the empire. In 1595, for instance, as many as 42 mints were issuing copper coins, 14 the *rupaya* and four the gold *muhrs*. Each coin carried the date of its manufacture, as well as the name of the mint from where it was released. Freshly minted coins had a greater value than those minted in previous regimes.



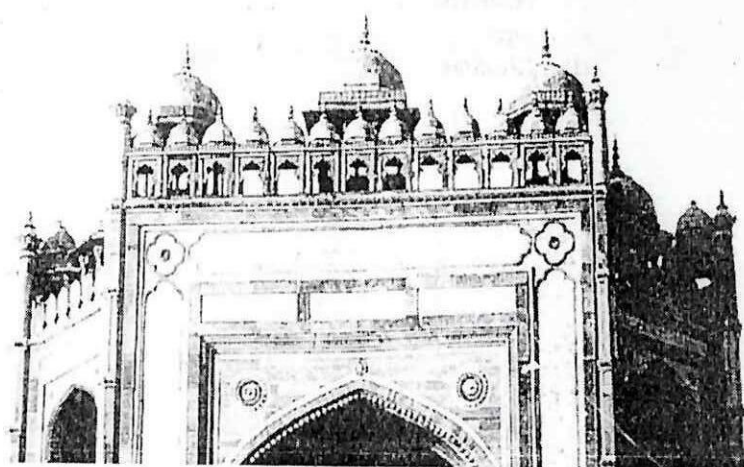
**Exercises**

1. What were the principal means of irrigation in Mughal India and how was water lifted from wells?
2. What were the new crops introduced in India in the sixteenth century, and in which regions were they cultivated?
3. Was there any significant overall increase in the extent of cultivation in Mughal India? If no, why?
4. Describe the main features of the village community.
5. Give an account of the various categories of zamindars in Mughal India.
6. Briefly, describe the armed strength of the zamindars.
7. Would you agree with the view that the peasantry in Mughal times was armed? Illustrate.
8. Comment on the slave trade in Mughal times.
9. Enumerate the principal non-agricultural goods produced in Mughal India.
10. What were hundis? How did they facilitate inland trade?
11. List the main items exported by the European trading companies from India.
12. What type of urban centres grew in Mughal India?
13. What was the size of the population in Mughal India?
14. Write short notes on:
  - a) *khudkashta*
  - b) *pahikashta*
  - c) *jagir*
  - d) *Khalisa*



# 19 CHAPTER

## CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PATTERNS



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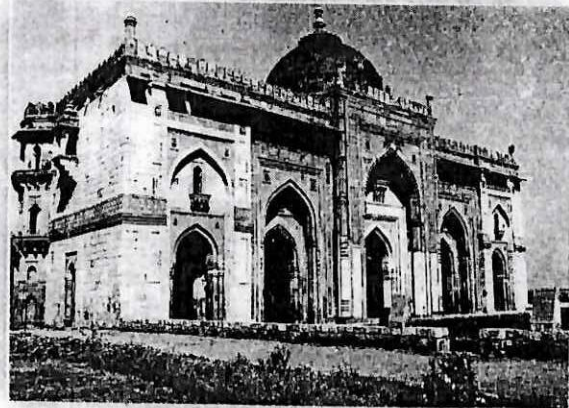


THE Mughal period was an age of cultural magnificence, of excellence in fields as varied as architecture, painting, literature, and music. The aesthetic accomplishments were a manifestation of the exalted status of the monarchs, their economic affluence, and the sheer permanence of their rule. Overall, culture and political power marched hand in hand, each reinforcing and strengthening the other.

#### Architecture

Though Babur is known to have commissioned the construction of several monuments, he was more fond of gardens. Despite his tumultuous career, he found time to lay out new gardens and refurbish extant ones. The gardens were equipped with running water supplied by Persian water-wheels and stepped wells, called *baolis*. Babur issued instructions that gardens and orchards be laid out in all large cities in his domains. In several instances, he himself decided the fruit trees and flowers to be planted there. Many of these gardens also served as camps for his army.

Only one mosque that can be attributed to Humayun has survived in Agra, though there are contemporary references to his buildings. Humayun is said to have begun the construction of a walled city and imperial palace, the Din Panah, at Indraprastha, the ancient

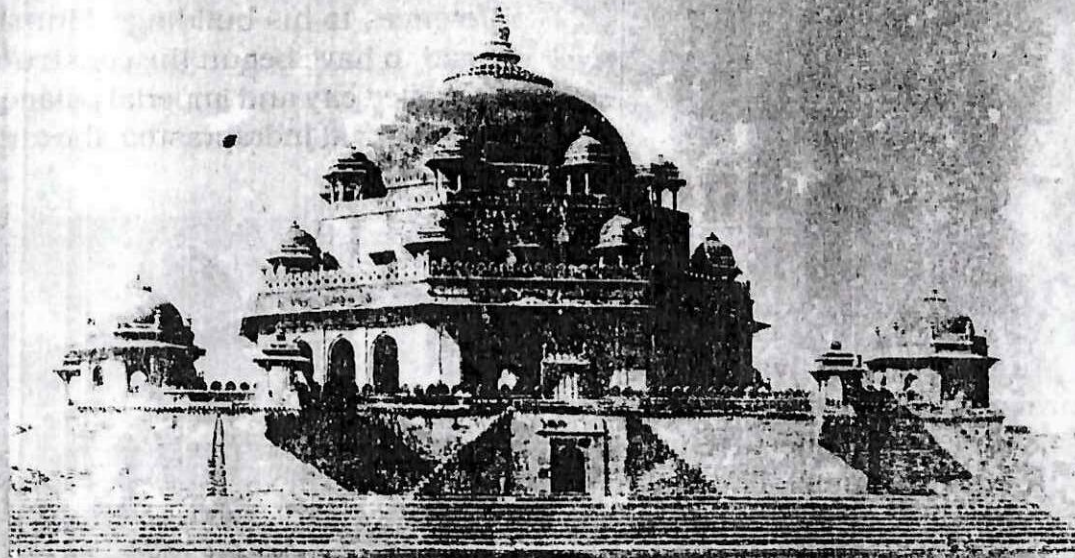


Delhi, Purana Qila, Qala-i-Kuhna Masjid

Indian city which figured so prominently in the *Mahabharata*. The site, known today as Purana Qila, was very close to the shrine of the Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya, and was designed to emphasise Mughal links with the Sufi order. It is, however, not clear as to how much work was actually done before Sher Shah's accession.

Sher Shah probably completed the fort and also built the Qala-i-Kuhna mosque within its precincts. Also attributed to Sher Shah is the huge mausoleum of his father at Sasaram in Bihar, which is perceived as part of his attempt to create an elevated genealogy for himself. Sher Shah constructed his own mausoleum at Sasaram, which was then the largest tomb in India.





*Sasaram, Tomb of Sher Shah*

### **The Akbari Monuments**

Akbar's most prominent construction in Delhi was the mausoleum of his father, Humayun, which, like the Din Panah, was in the vicinity of Nizamuddin Chishti's dargah. The tomb is located in the midst of a char bagh garden, an architectural pattern which became the standard for all Mughal royal mausolea. Built of red stone and crowned by a marble bulbous dome, the tomb took over eight years to complete and according to some experts, was intended to serve as the Mughal dynastic mausoleum in keeping with Timurid practices.

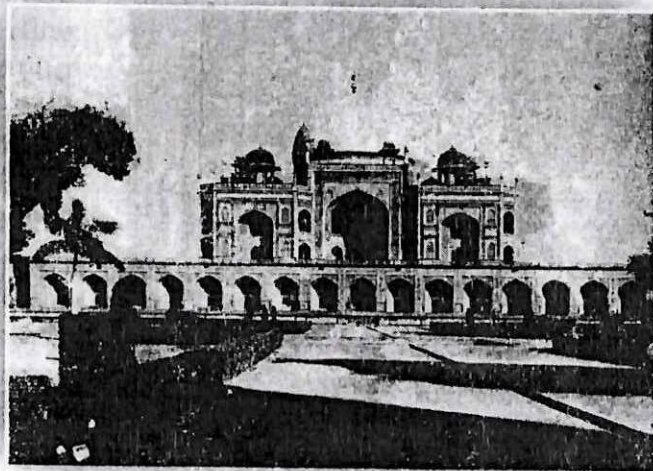
While the tomb was still being built, Akbar commissioned a number of fort palaces at strategic locations in north India. The first of these was the Agra Fort, which was completed in 1571. Other such structures included the fort palaces at Ajmer, Lahore and Allahabad, all sites of political significance. Ajmer was the gateway to Rajasthan, Lahore guarded the north-west while Allahabad was a response to the continued turmoil in eastern India.

According to Abul Fazl, the Agra fort contained more than five hundred stone buildings. Its main entrance was



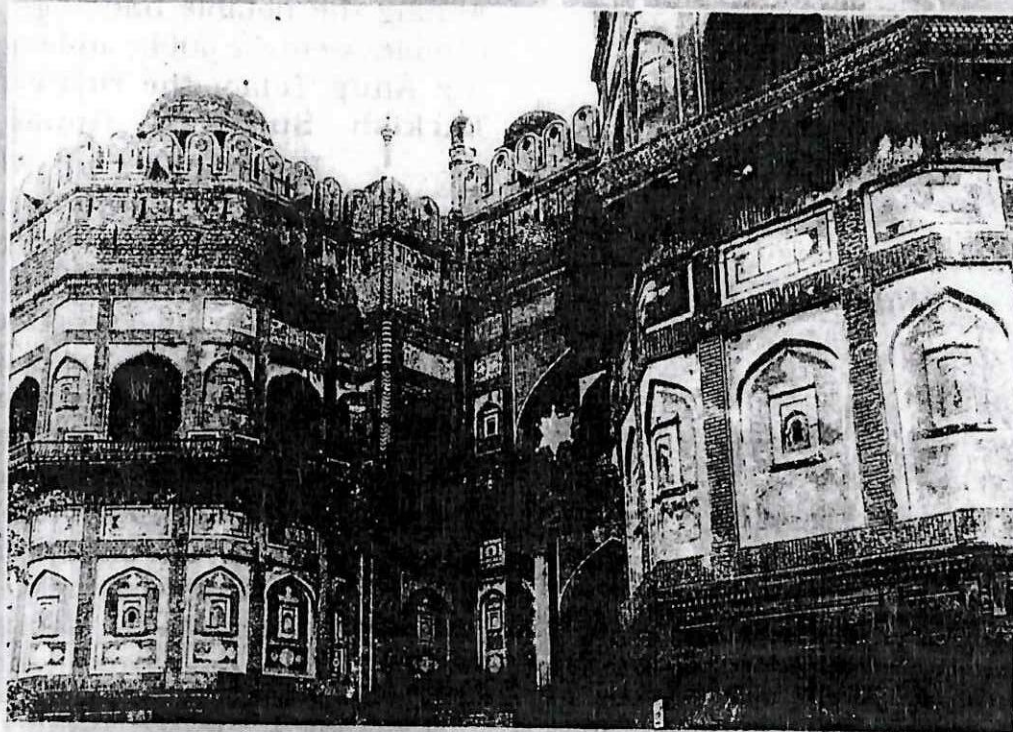
the massive Delhi Gate, decorated with inlay work in white marble. Most of the buildings within the fort were later pulled down by Shah Jahan to make way for marble ones. Notable among those that survived was the Jahangiri Mahal. A special feature of this building was its intricately carved brackets.

In 1569, Prince Salim was born at Sikri, the headquarters (*khanqah*) of Akbar's spiritual guide, Shaikh Salim Chishti, who had predicted the birth of the royal heir. Akbar now resolved to construct an imperial palace and a walled city near



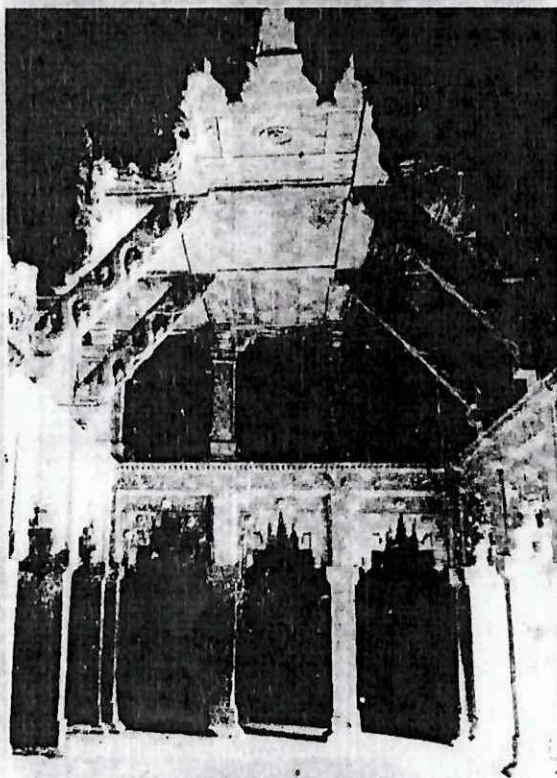
*Humayun's Tomb, Delhi*

the *khanqah* of Salim Chishti. Akbar lived in Fatehpur Sikri for fifteen years, after which he shifted to Lahore. Till

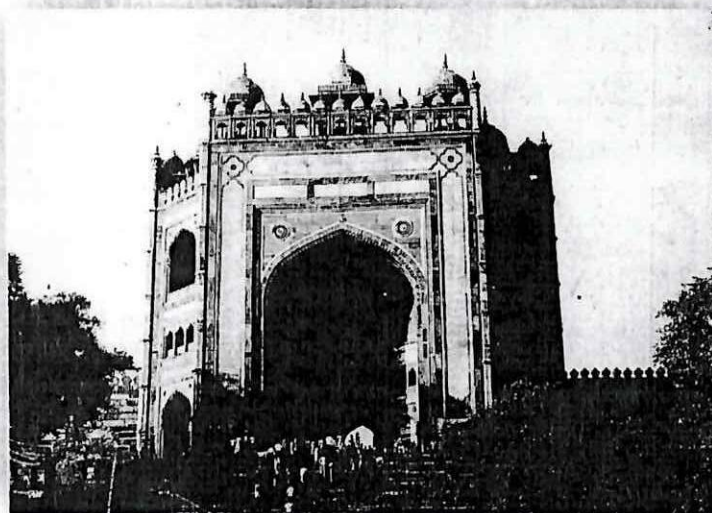


*Agra, Red Fort, Delhi Gate*





*Agra, Red Fort, Jahangiri Mahal*



*Fatehpur Sikri, Buland Darwaza*

1579, he remained intensely involved with the Chishti order. He made fourteen pilgrimages on foot to the other great Chishti centre, the dargah of Muinuddin Chishti, at Ajmer.

The outstanding feature of Fatehpur Sikri was an enormous Jami mosque, then the largest in Mughal India. When Shaikh Salim died, he was buried here. His all-white marble tomb is regarded as a masterpiece for its fine screens (*jalis*) and carved brackets, said to be the handiwork of artisans specially trained in Gujarat. In 1573, to commemorate his successful Gujarat campaign, Akbar built the Buland Darwaza, the gigantic gateway to the Jami complex.

Akbar's palace complex was situated south-east of the mosque. Among the notable buildings in the complex were the public audience hall; the Anup Talao; the richly carved Turkish Sultana's House; the Khwabgah or Akbar's sleeping chambers; the Daftar Khana or record office; and the Diwan-i-Khas or private audience hall. Apart from these public buildings, were a number of small multi-storied palaces, presumably the residences of the Emperor's family and nobles. The most prominent of these were the five-tiered Panch Mahal; Jodha Bai's palace which bore a pronounced Gujarati influence; and Raja Birbal's home that appears to



have been an administrative or ceremonial building.

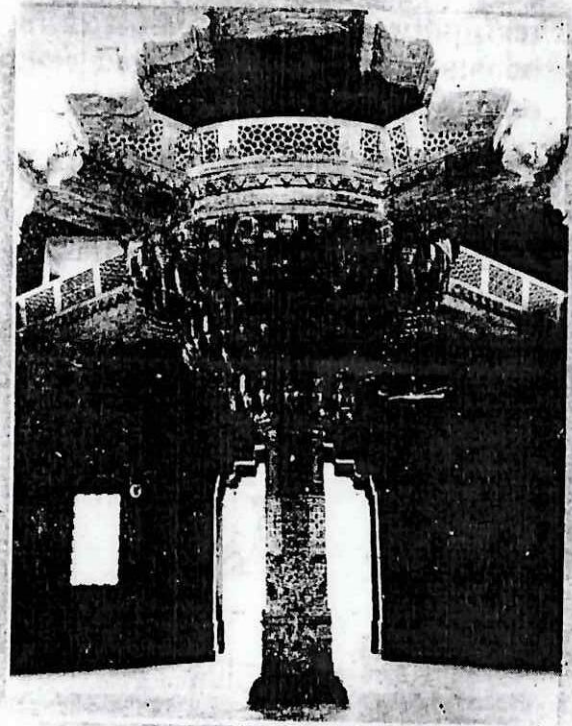
The imperial architectural style was carried to the various parts of the empire by Akbar's nobles, who erected similar structures that were as forceful expressions of the growing Mughal might.

### Jahangir's Contribution

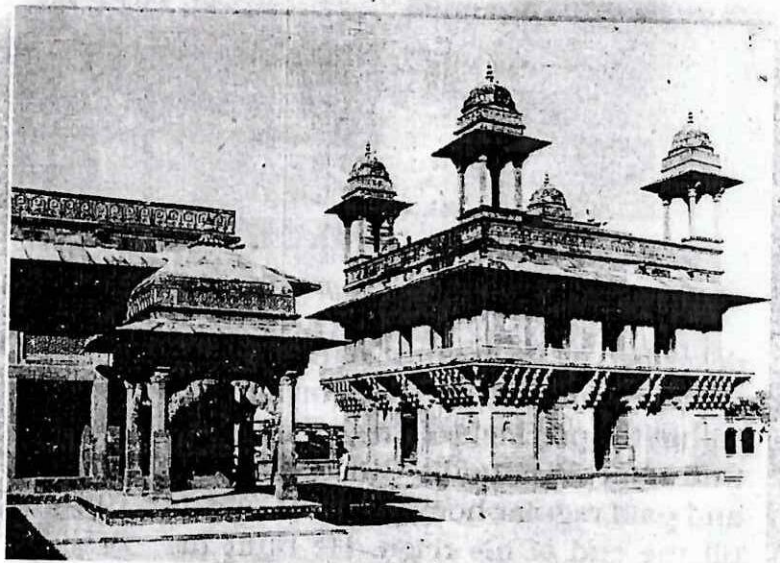
Jahangir was a patron of painting rather than architecture. The most well known building of his reign was the mausoleum he built for his father at Sikandra, near Agra, which is said to resemble the Panch Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri.

Jahangir's buildings at Agra fort were later pulled down by Shah Jahan. We do know, however, that beneath the viewing balcony (*jharoka*) from which he gave darshan to the public, he had installed life-size marble statues of the defeated Rana of Mewar, Amar Singh and his son, Karan, much as Akbar had placed statues of the Rajput heroes Jaimal and Fatha outside Agra Palace.

Jahangir was immensely interested in gardens; the most famous of those associated with him being in Srinagar. His queen, Nur Jahan's most well known architectural project is the white marble mausoleum she built near Agra for her father, Itimad-ud-Daula. It is a magnificently carved monument, inlaid with



*Fatehpur Sikri, Diwan-i-Khas*



*Fatehpur Sikri palace, Daulat Khana*

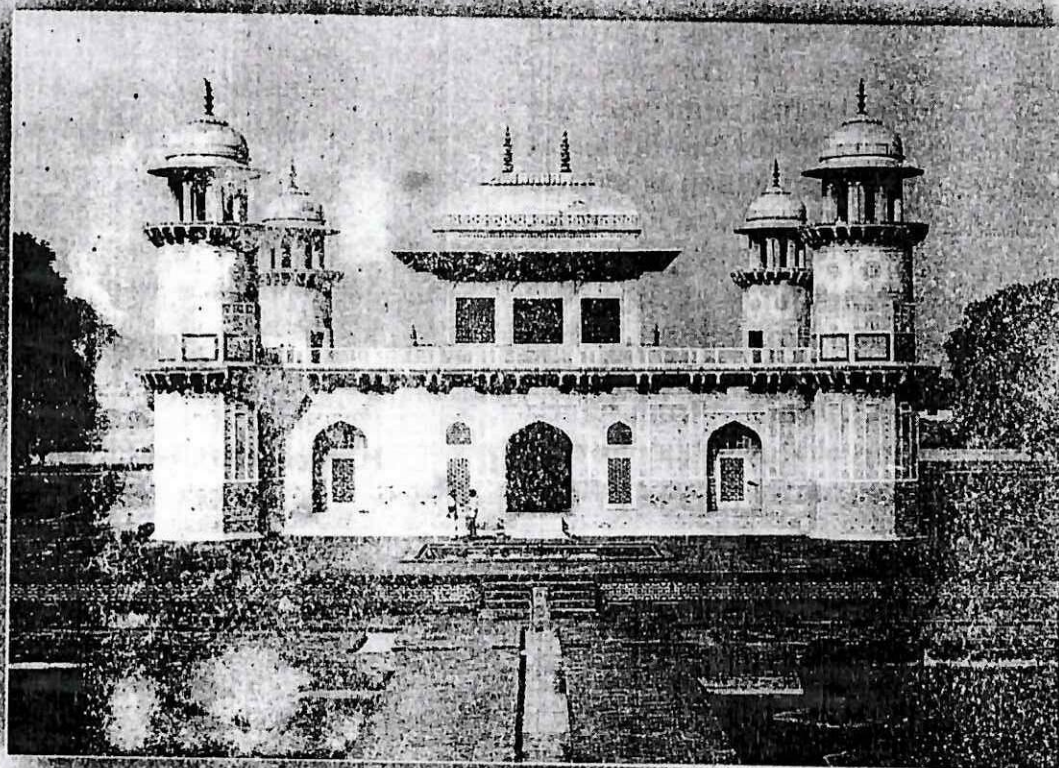


semi-precious stones in marble, a technique known as *pietra dura*. It boasts of richly ornamented ceilings and finely carved marble screens.

### **The Zenith under Shah Jahan**

Mughal architecture reached its zenith under Shah Jahan, who has been

In 1639, Shah Jahan began the construction of a walled city and imperial capital on the banks of the Yamuna at Delhi. Two imposing gates, the Akbarabad gate (Delhi Gate) and the Lahore gate led to the important areas of the new city of Shahjahanabad. The buildings on the river front were

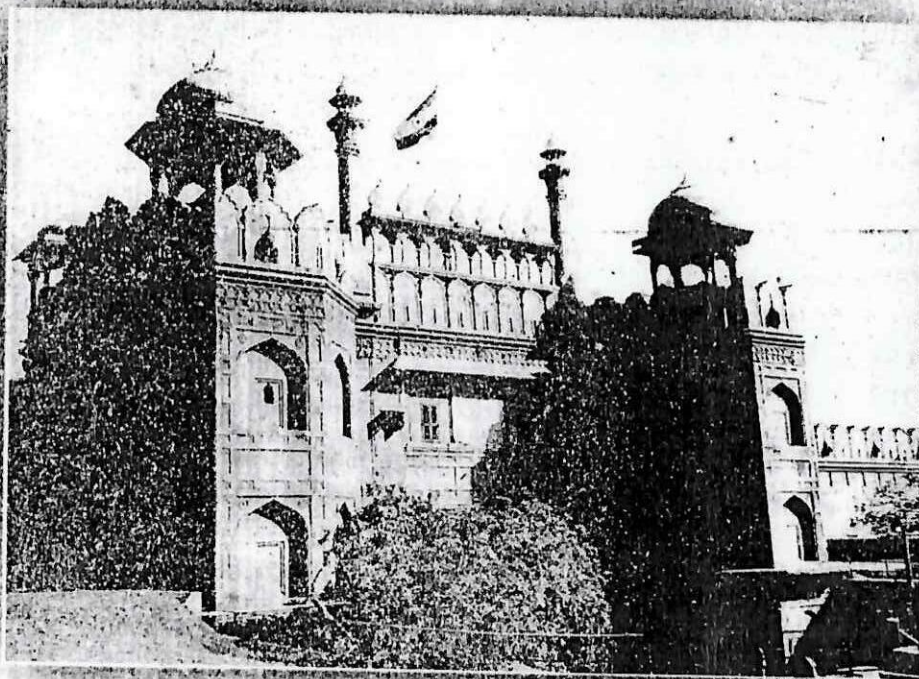


*Agra, Tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah*

described as its greatest patron. Shah Jahan commissioned the Jami Mosque within the precincts of the dargah of the Sufi saint, Muinuddin Chisti, at Ajmer and paid regular homage at the shrine till the end of his reign. He built his father's mausoleum at Lahore, and ordered fresh construction at the forts of Lahore and Agra.

exclusively reserved for the Emperor and his family, as in the other forts. All the buildings were profusely decorated. The Fort also contained the royal workshops (*karkhanas*) where articles needed by the court were manufactured. It has been estimated that about 57,000 people lived within the fort premises, catering to the





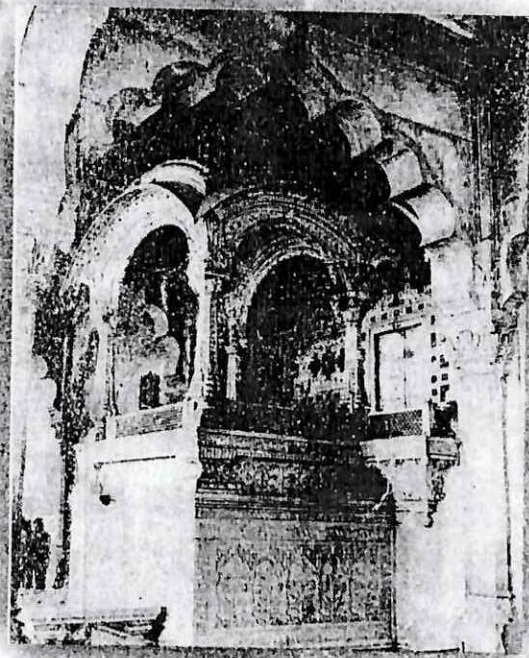
*Lahore Gate, Red Fort, Delhi*

various needs of the Emperor and his family.

Shah Jahan built two mosques in the city, the Idgah, designed to accommodate the huge crowds that gathered for the Id prayers, and the Jama Masjid, then the largest mosque in the country. Many more religious structures were constructed by the royal family.

Shah Jahan too was fond of gardens and ordered a number of them to be laid, the most famous of them being the Shalimar Garden in Kashmir.

But the monument by which he is best known is the Taj Mahal, built in the memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Laid out in the midst of a beautiful char bagh garden evoking the gardens of paradise, the all-marble structure was

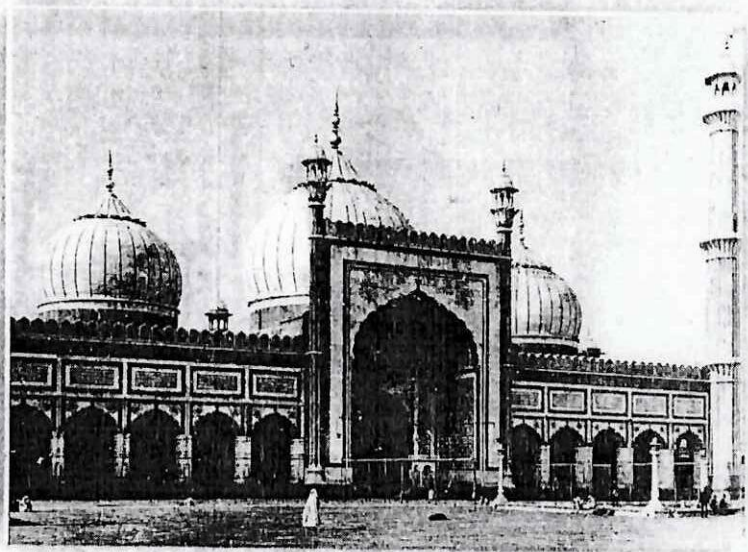


*Throne platform in diwan-i-am, Delhi, Red Fort*

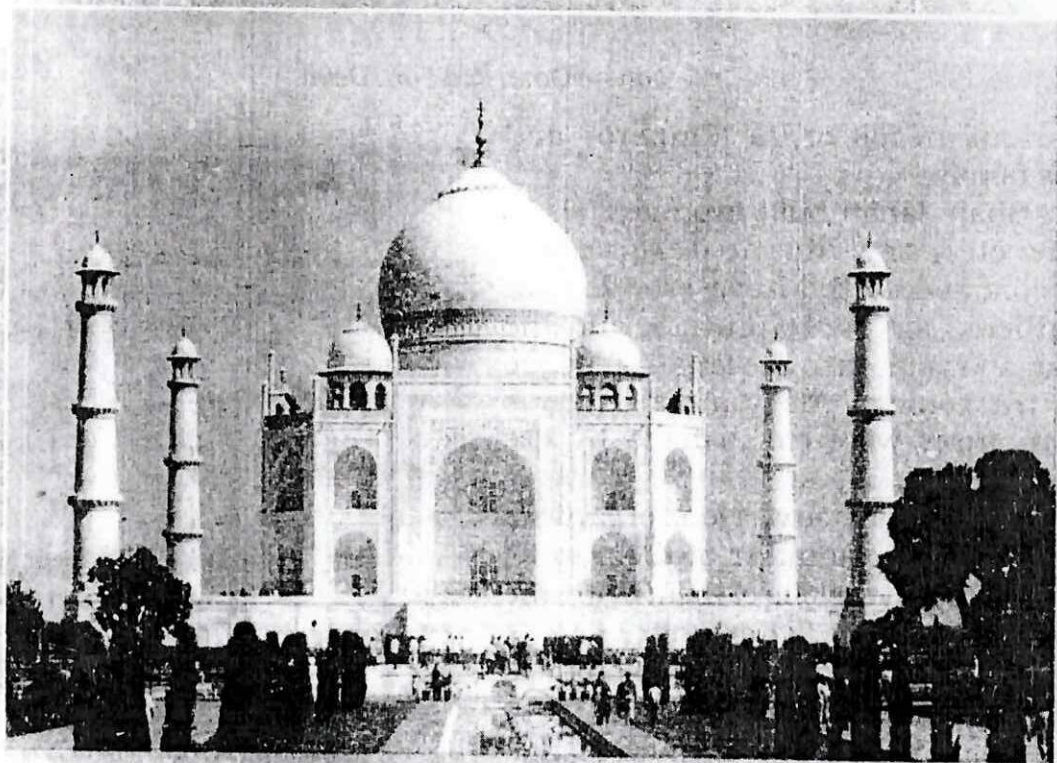


proportionately designed according to a series of geometrically related grids which account for its perfect balance and symmetry.

Shah Jahan forbade the construction of Hindu temples and destroyed several others, as for example, the temple constructed by Bir Singh at Orchha.



*Jama Masjid, Delhi*



*Taj Mahal*



### Decline

There are numerous contemporary references to Aurangzeb's repair of old mosques and construction of new ones. He is said to have repaired more mosques than any other Mughal Emperor. Aurangzeb often built mosques in forts captured from the Marathas. He also ordered the construction of the Moti Mosque inside Shahjahanabad fort. He commissioned the Badshahi Mosque at Lahore, which is the largest mosque in the sub-continent.

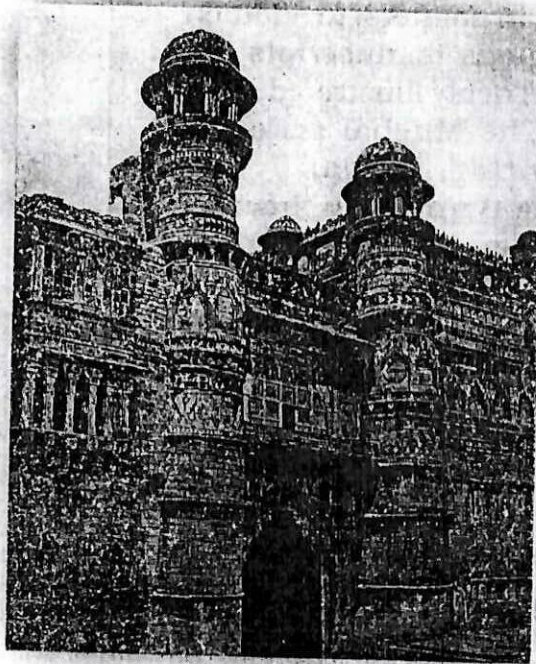
Aurangzeb destroyed several Hindu temples like the Keshava Rai temple built by Raja Bir Singh in Mathura, the Vishwanath temple constructed by Raja Man Singh in Banaras, besides several others in Kuch Bihar, Udaipur, Jodhpur and other centres in Rajasthan. In place of the Keshava Rai temple, Aurangzeb built an Idgah on its foundations. It may be noted that Mathura was then a city of secondary importance, and should not logically have engaged the Emperor's attention.

### Medieval Palaces and Buildings

A number of magnificent palaces built by Hindu princes in medieval times have survived. Among the most exceptional is the palace within Gwalior fort, built by Maharaja Man Singh in the early sixteenth century, and known as the Man Mandir. The Mughal Emperor, Babur, seeing it for the first time, was struck by its singular elegance. He noted in his memoirs, "I visited the buildings of Man Singh.... They are wonderful buildings."

Several royal palaces were built in Rajputana and central India during these centuries. Those at Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur and Amber are especially renowned. The Bundela prince, Raja Bir Singh, built magnificent palaces at Orchha and Datia.

In the eighteenth century, Jat rulers constructed palaces at Bharatpur and Deeg, while Maharaja Jai Singh founded the city of Jaipur. One of the oldest ghats of Banaras, the Man Mandir ghat, was originally built by Raja Man Singh of Amber, in about A.D. 1600.



*Elephant Gateway of Man Mandir*

In the south, four surviving palaces of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries are the Lotus Mahal at Hampi, the palace at Chandragiri fort, a palace at



Madurai commissioned by a nayak ruler, and one within the fort of Tanjore.

### Mughal Painting

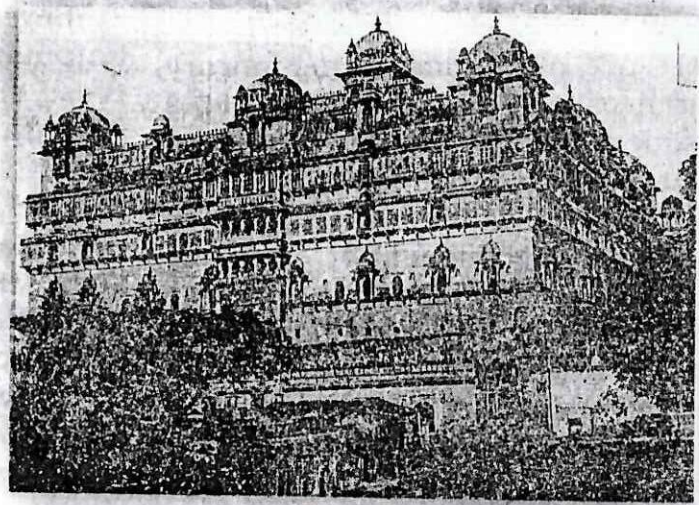
Even prior to the establishment of the Mughal school of painting, India had a venerable tradition of pictorial art. Hindus, Buddhists and Jains decorated their religious sanctuaries with carved and painted statues, as well as with murals of breathtaking splendour. The Ajanta caves are but the most spectacular expression of the skills of Indian painters. In addition, religious manuscripts too, were richly illustrated.

The Mughal school of painting began with Humayun, who became familiar with Persian art during his exile at the Safavid court. The ruler, Shah Tahmasp, was a great patron of painting, but gradually turned orthodox. Hence, many of his painters joined Humayun on his return journey to Hindustan. The

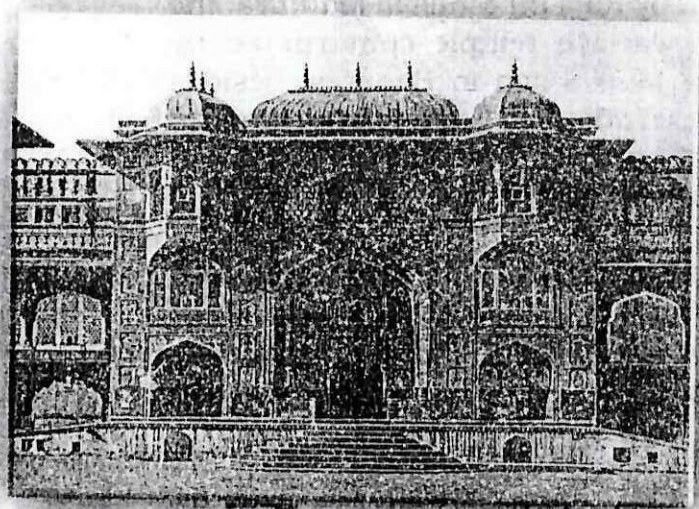
most renowned among them were Mir Sayyid Ali, Abdus Samad, Mir Musavvir and Dust Muhammad.

Early projects of Akbar's reign include the *Hamza nama*, the story of Amir Hamza, an uncle of Prophet Muhammad, who tried to convert the world to Islam. The manuscript

comprised of fourteen volumes, each having one hundred illustrations. At least fifty painters are believed to have worked on the project, an indication of the number of artists employed in the royal *karkhanas* (workshops). Akbar attracted artists from regional centres, who brought their native traditions of



*Datia Palace*



*Facade of Amber Palace, Entrance Hall*





Akbar inspecting the newly captured Gajpati, from the *Akbarnama*, a Mughal painting

painting to the court, where they adapted to the evolving Mughal style.

Among the major painters at Akbar's court was Daswanth who illustrated the *Razmnama* (the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*). After the *Razmnama*, Akbar's interest shifted to historical works. Among the historical projects now sanctioned were the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* (a history of the first thousand years of Islam) and the *Timur Nama*, an illustrated account of the life of Timur. The most important of Akbar's historical projects was the *Akbarnama*, the history of his own reign, written by Abul Fazl. With the Emperor's growing interest in historical subjects, Basawan



A Mughal miniature painting  
Shah Jahan being weighed in gold

became one of the prominent court artists.

Jesuit missionaries presented Akbar with illustrated copies of the Bible. Akbar had many of the European works copied by his painters.

Mughal painting scaled fresh heights under Jahangir. He commissioned individual pictures and portraits which he placed in elegant albums. The only important historical manuscript illustrated during this period was the *Jahangir Nama*. Under Jahangir, painters developed their individual styles and areas of expertise. Mansur excelled as a painter of animals and flowers, Abul Hasan and Bishan Das



in imperial portraits, and Govardhan in paintings of holy men and musicians.

Shah Jahan, unlike Jahangir, was more interested in architecture. In his eighth regnal year, however, he commissioned an official history of this reign, the *Padshahnama*. The illustrations to the text depict court ceremonies and important events. Like Jahangir, Shah Jahan also formed albums, the best of them now known as the Minto Album.

As a consequence of Aurangzeb's lack of interest in the art of painting, there was a dispersal of artists to the courts of local rulers which led to the growth of the Rajput and Pahari schools of painting. The Rajput schools of painting have been described as fundamentally "the old indigenous art of India," a direct descendant of the classic frescoes of Ajanta. Among the Pahari schools may be mentioned Kangra, Basoli, Chamba and Jammu. There was a tremendous growth of mythological themes in the paintings of both the Rajput and Pahari schools.

#### Music

The *Ain-i-Akbari* provides a list of thirty-six highly skilled musicians at Akbar's court. The most well known among them was Tansen. Jahangir and Shah Jahan also maintained an entourage of musicians. Aurangzeb, however, banished all musicians attached to the royal court.

#### Literary Developments

During Akbar's reign, Raja Todar Mal translated the *Bhagavata Purana* into Persian. Abul Fazl and his brother Faizi

translated Sanskrit works into Persian, usually with the assistance of Hindu pundits. Translations of Arabic, Turkish and Kashmiri works were also undertaken. Though Turkish was the native tongue of the Central Asian elite, Persian was the language of the Mughal court.

Some scholars have observed that parallel Hindu and Muslim intellectual traditions developed at Akbar's court. Persian literature in this period, they say, was uninfluenced by Sanskrit, even as Sanskrit and Hindi remained immune to Persian cultural traditions. However, Abdul Rahim Khan Khana and Ras Khan were among the poets of the time who wrote in Hindi.

The translation of Sanskrit works into Persian continued under Jahangir. Shah Jahan's court patronised Hindu poets like Sunderdas, Chintamani, Kavindracharya, and Jagannath Pandit. Among the Hindu scholars and poets at Aurangzeb's court were Indrajit Tripathi and Samant.

The tradition of history-writing prospered in the Mughal period. Important chroniclers of the age include Abul Fazl, Nizammuddin Ahmad, Badauni, Abdul Hamid Lahori, Khafi Khan, and Saqi Mustaid Khan. Besides, rulers like Jahangir and ladies of the royal family, like Gulbadan Begum, penned accounts of the eras they lived in.

#### Bhakti Movement Continues

Outside courtly circles, the *sant* parampara continued to grow and several new *panths* arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the notable *sants* of the late



medieval period were Sant Malukdas (1573-1671) who was active in the region around Allahabad and Lucknow; Prannath (1617-1693) an ascetic leader in the Bundelkhand area and spiritual guide of the famous Bundela raja Chhatra Sal; Dharanidas

and Dariya Sahib in Bihar; Jagjivandas (1669-1760) who revived the Satnami panth in north-eastern Uttar Pradesh; Charandas (1702-1781) who had a large following around Delhi and eastern Punjab and Paltu Singh in Ayodhya.

### Exercises

1. Which were the main fort palace complexes Akbar commissioned? Give a brief description of Agra Fort.
2. Give an account of the imperial city of Fatehpur Sikri.
3. Discuss the architectural achievements of Shah Jahan.
4. Discuss the development of painting under Akbar. In what ways did it differ from works produced under Jahangir?
5. Name some important bhakti saints of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries.



## GLOSSARY

|                  |                                                                                                                     |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Afaqis</i>    | first generation Muslim immigrants from Arabia or Central Asia.                                                     |
| <i>Ahadis</i>    | cavalrymen employed directly by the Mughal Emperor.                                                                 |
| <i>Amil</i>      | agent in charge of revenue collection.                                                                              |
| <i>Amin</i>      | a revenue officer entrusted with revenue collection.                                                                |
| <i>Aryavarta</i> | North India                                                                                                         |
| <i>Bargir</i>    | cavalryman riding a horse which belongs to his leader. Later the term was used to refer to light cavalry generally. |
| <i>Bhil</i>      | hunter-gatherer community found across a vast expanse from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.               |
| <i>Bigha</i>     | unit of land.                                                                                                       |
| <i>Caliph</i>    | head of the entire Muslim world.                                                                                    |
| <i>Chaudhuri</i> | head of several villages or <i>parganas</i> .                                                                       |
| <i>Chauth</i>    | claim to one-fourth of the government's share of revenue.                                                           |
| <i>Dagh</i>      | branding horses with imperial insignia.                                                                             |
| <i>Deccani</i>   | Muslims born in south India.                                                                                        |
| <i>Dam</i>       | Mughal copper coin which was one-fortieth of a rupee.                                                               |
| <i>Dargah</i>    | a Muslim saint's tomb.                                                                                              |
| <i>Deshmukh</i>  | headman of a <i>pargana</i> in the Deccan.                                                                          |
| <i>Dhimmis</i>   | non-Muslim people who were entitled to state protection in lieu of <i>jaziya</i> .                                  |
| <i>Din</i>       | religion.                                                                                                           |
| <i>Diwan</i>     | fiscal or revenue officer in the Mughal administration.                                                             |
| <i>Farman</i>    | a formal letter or order formally issued by the Mughal Emperor.                                                     |
| <i>Fath nama</i> | victory proclamation issued by a Muslim ruler.                                                                      |
| <i>Fatwa</i>     | a public ruling issued by a Muslim jurist.                                                                          |
| <i>Faujdar</i>   | a Mughal officer with military and administrative duties.                                                           |
| <i>Ganj</i>      | a grain market.                                                                                                     |
| <i>Ghazi</i>     | an armed warrior fighting for Islam.                                                                                |
| <i>Gomashta</i>  | commercial agent.                                                                                                   |



|                        |                                                                                    |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Hun</i>             | a gold coin.                                                                       |
| <i>Hundi</i>           | bill of exchange.                                                                  |
| <i>Ibadat Khana</i>    | house of worship, constructed by Akbar for holding religious discourses.           |
| <i>Inam</i>            | hereditary grant of land.                                                          |
| <i>Iqta</i>            | a revenue assignment in lieu of salary.                                            |
| <i>Jagir</i>           | an assignment of land revenue given in lieu of salary.                             |
| <i>Jagirdar</i>        | holder of revenue-yielding land assigned in lieu of salary.                        |
| <i>Jama</i>            | the assessed or expected revenue of the state.                                     |
| <i>Jati</i>            | an endogamous group, unit of caste.                                                |
| <i>Jauhar</i>          | self-immolation by wives of Rajput warriors who faced imminent defeat.             |
| <i>Jihad</i>           | war on nonbelievers in Islam.                                                      |
| <i>Jaziya / Jiziya</i> | annual tax to be paid by non-Muslims in lieu of state protection.                  |
| <i>Karkhana</i>        | a workshop usually maintained by the ruler.                                        |
| <i>Khalsa</i>          | Sikh brotherhood instituted by Guru Gobind Singh.                                  |
| <i>Khalisa</i>         | lands whose revenue went directly to the central treasury.                         |
| <i>Khanazada</i>       | an officer boasting of hereditary family service to the Mughals.                   |
| <i>Khanqah</i>         | establishment of a Sufi saint.                                                     |
| <i>Khutba</i>          | a sermon made in Friday mosques                                                    |
| <i>Madad-i-maash</i>   | tax free grants of land generally given to Muslim holy men.                        |
| <i>Madarasa</i>        | school of Islamic learning.                                                        |
| <i>Mansab</i>          | rank and status given to a Mughal officer.                                         |
| <i>Mansabdar</i>       | holder of mansab.                                                                  |
| <i>Muhtasib</i>        | incharge of markets and public morality.                                           |
| <i>Muqaddam</i>        | village headman.                                                                   |
| <i>Nankar</i>          | portion of the revenue given to zamin'dars for their services.                     |
| <i>Nayaks</i>          | armed elites in the south who had been in the service of the Vijayanagara kingdom. |
| <i>Nirgun</i>          | Supreme God conceived as beyond all qualifications.                                |
| <i>Pargana</i>         | an administrative sub-division of a <i>sarkar</i> under the Mughals.               |
| <i>Patwari</i>         | village accountant.                                                                |



|                     |                                                                                                               |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Qanungo</i>      | keeper of revenue records in a <i>pargana</i> .                                                               |
| <i>Qasba</i>        | a town, seat of subordinate revenue administration and Muslim gentry.                                         |
| <i>Qazi</i>         | a Muslim judge who gives decisions according to the Sharia.                                                   |
| <i>Raiya</i>        | peasant.                                                                                                      |
| <i>Saguna</i>       | 'qualified' manifestations or incarnations of the Divine.                                                     |
| <i>Sardeshmukhi</i> | claim to one-tenth of the government share of revenue, based on status as a sardeshmukh or head of deshmukhs. |
| <i>Sarkar</i>       | administrative division under the Mughals usually consisting of a number of <i>parganas</i> .                 |
| <i>Sarrafs</i>      | money-changers.                                                                                               |
| <i>Sawar</i>        | denoted the number of cavalrymen a mansabdar was to maintain.                                                 |
| <i>Sharia</i>       | Islamic law.                                                                                                  |
| <i>Suba</i>         | province in the Mughal Empire.                                                                                |
| <i>Sufis</i>        | mystics of Islam.                                                                                             |
| <i>Ulema</i>        | Muslim religious class learned in the Sharia.                                                                 |
| <i>Ummah</i>        | the Muslim community of believers.                                                                            |
| <i>Varna</i>        | the theoretical four-fold division of Hindu society.                                                          |
| <i>Waqf</i>         | grants to Muslim religious bodies.                                                                            |
| <i>Watan Jagir</i>  | ancestral holdings of mansabdars.                                                                             |
| <i>Zabt</i>         | the system of assessment of revenue, based on measurement of land.                                            |
| <i>Zamindar</i>     | a broad category covering a variety of local landed elites.                                                   |
| <i>Zat</i>          | personal rank of mansabdar.                                                                                   |



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